Interview:Christian Schwarz-Schilling, High Representative for BiH: “We Need No International Conference on the BiH Future”

Christian Schwarz-Schilling, High Representative

We Need No International Conference on the BiH Future

I will allow no referendums ● Delegates found time to discuss their own benefits but not the citizens’ ● I will intervene only if the circumstances are grave

High Representative Christian Schwarz-Schilling does not support an initiative of Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader regarding an international conference on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In his interview for Dnevni avaz he reflected both on that issue as well as the stories about referendum on secession of Republika Srpska, displeased decertified police officers, imminent privatisation of all three telecom operators.

Bad delegates

□ ***How do you comment performance of the delegates? How many laws have they adopted since you recently addressed the Parliament***?

– I spoke before the Parliament on the 24th of May this year and at that time I presented the list of laws which should be passed: from the Law on Higher Education, through the Law on Salaries, Banking Supervision System, Fiscal Council, Pharmaceutical Law…

As far as I can see only the Law on Pharmaceuticals has some chance to be adopted soon. Other laws, the ones that would significantly improve lives of ordinary citizens, will have to wait. Parliamentarians did not find the time to talk about that. However they did find the time to talk in details about how to increase their salaries or enjoy privileged pensions. I am disappointed by such performance of delegates!

It is not a way in which BiH politicians should act in this important political moment.

□ ***Well? Are you going to act in response? Impose laws?***

– No. I will not impose laws. I have clearly said that I will not act in legislative, administrative and judicial institutions. It has nothing to do with democracy and attempts to develop institutions. Even though I am dissatisfied with the Parliament, the delegates must see themselves that this manner of work is not good, it gives no result… Furthermore by this I show delegates and politicians the consequences of their failure to work. Some of them try to convince me that it is the time for me to go and at the same time they do nothing as I am here. Imagine how what they will do when I leave?

Status of decertified police officers

– I took the office of the High Representative in February this year. In April I organised the first meeting

with United Nations authorities at which the issue of decertified police officers was discussed. The issue is not simple at all, particularly in the UN context, which is very difficult to change or bring on to admit a mistake.

When I started to deal with this issue there was no one in the UN who would wish to talk about that. The situation changed now and they negotiate at the expert level how to solve the status of these people. I wish to emphasise that I understand their position and I am doing my best to improve it. Nevertheless, things are not that simple and demand a lot of energy and time. I hope that it will settle in the best way and I am maximally devoted to that.

– *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* reports that you will not leave nor will the OHR be closed if nationalist forces win the coming elections. Is that true?

– First, the decision on the closure of the OHR is not final. It will be verified next February. That is when we will know what exactly to do.

Second, what are nationalist parties? Let me say one thing: we will wait for the results of the elections, and then we will know where we stand. I can only say that, if extreme parties won, we would have to reconsider our further moves very carefully.

– Speaking about elections, which are your favourites?

– My role here is not to have any favourites! The voters of this country have to think for themselves and decide whom to give their vote. I would react only if I saw a radical option trying to destabilise the situation.

– There is another kind of voting – referendum. In the Balkans referenda have nearly always preceded wars. How do you view the latest debate on referendum in the RS?

– I would not agree with you that referenda are followed by wars. Look at Montenegro . There the referendum served to complete one process. But, you cannot compare that with BiH.

Here there is no constitutional basis for organising a referendum like the one that is mentioned in the RS.

Dodik's Statements

Those who talk about referendum in the RS are cynical. First a war was conducted, people were expelled from one part of the territory, ethnic cleansing took place, and now they say that they can organise a referendum. That would be wrong in many ways. That would show that some decisions can be made and forced through war.

In short, I will not allow a referendum that is mentioned in some circles in BiH.

□ *Some politicians criticise you for being tolerant and too mild with RS Prime Minister Dodik and his statements. What is your response to that?*

– Did Prime Minister repeat his story about referendum? No. It is one thing when politicians talk about one thing or another – "what would happen if", and another when statements come from people in power. When people in power say things that are not acceptable, then I react.

There are people who would want me to be loud, to shout. I am not like that, I do not make noise. I am a man who wants results and I am trying to achieve them.

Question of Constitutional Changes in BiH

– The basis for a discussion on constitutional changes, which should start right after the elections, is the agreement of

six political parties, which, because of two missing votes, was not adopted in the Parliament.

So, we could start with that proposal. But we will first see what the Parliament will look like after the elections.

If that is not possible, then the talks should be reopened from the start and deal with everything.

Results of Work

□What are the results of your work in these first six months that you have been in BiH?

– The forthcoming elections are very important and people begin to understand that the decision before them is very important. Further, people see that the international community here is not a protector. They realize that we will intervene only if something serious is happening, if security is at risk or in a similar situation.

Therefore, people in BiH are for the first time in a situation where they are owners of their own destiny. In this process of realizing and learning they make mistakes, but that is normal.

□ So, you are here only keeping the peace?

– No. I work a lot on convincing people … It is more interesting for media when decisions are made, laws imposed, individuals removed. But, I am trying to convince people that they need to do their part of the work, I explain why we behave the way we behave, I point out the obligations of those who are in position to decide about something. BiH is now being taught democracy and it is doing well.

□ Let us go back to BiH's future. What is your position with regard to the idea of Prime Minister Sanader about organizing an international conference on BiH? Media report that you support that.

– I have seen this, and the information that the idea has the support of the German Government. That is not true! I have met Prime Minister Sanader three or four times so far and we never talked about that, nor has he ever mentioned it.

I do not think that an international conference on BiH is necessary at all. The problems that this country has can be solved between its politicians or with the assistance of the international community. Of course, in these situations, good communications with neighbours are required. An international conference is the last thing we need, and at this time, I do not see its point.

Telecom Privatization

– I play no role in the activities on privatizing telecoms in this country. I do not favor the «Deutsche Telekom» or any other company in this process. I am concerned only that the whole process is conducted in accordance with the interests of BiH citizens and law.

Stabilization and Association Agreement by the end of the year

– I am optimistic that the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) can be concluded by the end of this year or first months of the next year. I wish to clarify some dilemmas arising from the discussions about police reform, which is of extreme importance for this process.

According to the agreement on police reform from October last year, police experts needed time and opportunity to agree solutions. When they finish their work, then politicians will make the final decision. Therefore, we, in the international community, insist that the Police Reform Directorate should continue its work and achieve results. And then, their agreement will be placed before politicians who will say what they think about it.

I understand that some things are more complex because of elections. Therefore, I believe they will be resolved with a «cooler head» after elections. This, of course means, that the police reform agreement will be postponed, and the SAA will not be concluded in October or November, but at the end of this or beginning of the next year. It is important that the principles of police reform are not violated, and if we are late a month or two it is not a catastrophe.