

MPs Who Boycott Parliament Undermine Democracy, Should Be Penalised

The High Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, has called for penalties to be imposed on parliamentarians who bring democracy to a halt by walking out of the Parliamentary Assembly.

“In normal European countries, there are consequences for parliamentarians who boycott and block the work of their Parliaments,” the High Representative said today. “I have asked the speaker and his two deputies to recommend penalties that will be imposed in the event of a repetition of the boycott of the last few weeks. They have promised to present their recommendations in one month’s time.”

The High Representative was speaking to journalists on the steps of the BiH Parliament. The Parliament last met on 24 May, when the High Representative presented it with a reform agenda which – if enacted over the summer – can help create jobs and improve living standards in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Following a walk-out by Serb delegates the Parliament has done nothing.

The High Representative described this situation as “unacceptable to the citizens and peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina ” adding that: “Parliament is the highest decision-making body in a democracy. If Parliament stops working, democracy stops functioning.

“The citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina voted for their political representatives in good faith. Parliamentarians should never – I repeat – never deprive citizens of their democratic right to political representation.”

The High Representative stressed that although the Dayton constitution provides safeguards to protect the vital national interests of Bosnia and Herzegovina 's constituent peoples, a veto could only be used on the merits of a particular issue, not to prevent Parliament from meeting.

"A veto cannot be used to obstruct the functioning of democracy, to block dialogue," he said. "To use a veto in such a way is destructive of the vital interests of not one, but all of Bosnia and Herzegovina 's constituent peoples."

The High Representative welcomed the fact that Parliament will resume its work on Monday. However, he noted that, while this is a step in the right direction: "It does not begin to resolve the issue of delegates blocking the work of Parliament, of bringing it into disrepute, of turning it into an *Inat kuća*, a house of spite.

"This Parliament has a heavy legislative programme in front of it. Laws on Higher Education, Obligations, Banking Supervision, Pharmaceuticals and other critical areas are all waiting to be passed. They are fundamental to the well being of all citizens of this country, irrespective of their ethnic identity."

The High Representative concluded his remarks by stressing that BiH problems need BiH solutions. "Some people seem to believe that I should use my Bonn powers to impose these laws and punish or remove individuals who block the work of Parliament. But I will not do the jobs that the institutions and elected leaders of this country must do."