

Hold Political Parties Accountable

It is the role of civil society to hold political parties accountable, therefore articulate non-governmental organizations are essential, the High Representative Christian Schwarz-Schilling said today. "In the past the International Community has played a major role, including interventions in the political process using the Bonn Powers. That era is over. If you want BiH to succeed, you have to *make* it succeed, and that means getting involved in the election campaign."

The High Representative was speaking at a seminar on civil society organized in Sarajevo by the Heinrich-Boell Foundation.

The October Elections in BiH will be conducted without a safety net, the High Representative said. "The International Community isn't going to step in and fix things on behalf of local politicians. Those who are elected have to agree on constructive policies. If citizens want more constructive politics than they have seen until now, they will have to become politically involved, either in political parties or in non-governmental organizations."

The High Representative called on civic groups to ensure that campaigning is fair and transparent and substantive. "Politicians must be asked to explain what they are going to do and – equally important – *how* they are going to do it," he said.

He said the economic, social and political steps being negotiated in the Stabilisation and Association process, including meeting the European Commission's requirements on implementing police reform, the establishment of a viable Public Broadcasting System and full cooperation with the ICTY,

represent a useful core for any political manifesto.

“Political parties also have an opportunity to demonstrate their competence and constructive thinking between now and October,” the High Representative said, “by taking concrete positions on key pieces of legislation which effect people’s lives and the economy.”

“Campaigning is not about abstract political theory,” the High Representative said. “It’s about bread and butter issues. Voters understand this, they must make political candidates understand it too.”