

Interview: Wolfgang Petritsch, the High Representative in BiH for Onasa

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SARAJEVO, May 25 (ONASA) – A huge burden during my three-years mandate was the fact that former leaders of Bosnian Serbs – Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic – were at large, preventing faster changes in BiH, said outgoing High Representative to BiH Wolfgang Petritsch in the last interview to reporters of domestic media, before leaving the duty on May 27.

“Some leaders in the country do not see that with Karadzic and Mladic at large, you cannot become a part of European civilization,” Petritsch said.

“There could be no big progress, nor changes in the country. Foreign investors will not invest in a country which has war criminals at large.”

Giving his engagement in the civil aspect of implementing the Dayton Accords, Petritsch didn’t have a role in their arresting. But, he added, there was no meeting in and outside BiH, in NATO, UN or the European Union without him calling for the arrest of Karadzic and Mladic.

“It is natural that I wanted the arrests to occur in time of my mandate,” Petritsch said.

Asked why he imposed several decisions and laws at the end of his mandate when he had a partnership relations built up with domestic politicians. Petritsch said that he wanted to see domestic solutions. “But, when stalemate occurs I’m obliged to intervene.”

At the same time, he pointed out the danger that BiH politicians, as long as a high representative is present, largely rely on the international community.

“This can be avoided when a bigger progress is achieved. BiH is now not in such phase while a problem is also non-functioning of the parliamentary mechanism,” he said.

Speaking on the need and importance of judiciary reform in BiH, Petritsch said that it cannot be allowed the BiH citizens to live in to various legal systems. “The essence of judiciary reform is to ensure both entity citizens to have the same rights and the same legal system.”

Asked whether a final goal of the international community is to marginalize the entities and strengthen the BiH institutions, Petritsch said that BiH needs to be a functional European country, and will never be centralized.

“A federation system will always be with two strong centers – Banja Luka and Sarajevo. The country must soon finance its institutions alone,” he added.

Petritsch assessed the Agreement on implementation of the Constitutional Court’s Decision on constituency of nations as a beginning of the path for “a normal” BiH, or a modern and country that functions better.

He does not believe that national parties will mark bigger success at the general elections in October.