

SDHR Matthias Sonn Highlights the Primacy of Dayton, “Ownership” and Europeanisation in Peace Implementation

The Dayton Agreement and the promotion of the concept of “ownership” have together prevented Bosnia and Herzegovina from becoming a protectorate, Senior Deputy High Representative Matthias Sonn told an international conference in Paris on Tuesday. “The Dayton blueprint outlines the structures that BiH needed in order to become a sovereign and democratic state,” the SDHR said. “By emphasising domestic responsibility, the International Community has consciously and progressively sought to retreat, systematically from areas where the domestic authorities demonstrate the will and the competence to act on their own behalf.”

The SDHR was addressing a conference on “Humanitarian Interventions and Crisis Management: the Lessons of the Balkan Experience,” organised by the Institute for International and Strategic Relations.

The SDHR said that although there has been a continuous and long-term engagement by the IC in the political, social and economic life of BiH, a reliable framework has been established that allows domestic leaders to develop the authority they will need as the IC reduces its day-to-day engagement.

“The Dayton process is fostering a new kind of political consciousness in BiH,” he said. “This has been more time consuming and complex than physical reconstruction or straightforward political negotiation. Time is still needed for the potency of extreme nationalism to diminish; it has had to be replaced by a civic alternative, a political culture within which compromise, consensus and cooperation will no longer be viewed as weakness.”

The SDHR said that the lessons of intervention in BiH include the necessity of a clear and comprehensive plan of action, and the use of external stimuli – such as the prospect of Council of Europe membership and eventual EU membership — to bring about positive change. He noted that the CoE accession criteria and the EU Road Map require the passage of laws that will bring tangible and immediate benefits to BiH citizens. At the same time, the aspiration to integrate BiH further in the European mainstream is a unifying factor in political life, enjoying the support of people from different political parties and different communities.