AFP Article:”Bosnian Serbs criticised for not supporting central institutions

BANJA LUKA, Bosnia-Hercegovina, Nov 5 (AFP) – The international envoy to Bosnia, Wolfgang Petritsch, slammed Bosnian Serb authorities Monday for their lack of support for the work of central Bosnia’s institutions.

Petritsch, the high representative to Bosnia-Hercegovina, said that he was dissatisfied with the way Republika Srpska (RS, Bosnian Serb entity) “supports, or rather does not support, the work” of Bosnia’s central institutions.

“RS as a poor island cannot survive … cannot become a partner in Europe,” Petritsch warned after meeting with RS President Mirko Sarovic and Vice-President Dragan Cavic in Banja Luka. Sarovic said the priority was to turn Bosnia into a functional state that could be brought into Europe.

He added that he agreed with Petritsch on the need for “future work and necessity of higher coordination” between the entities – Republika Srpska and Muslim-Croat Federation – as well as at the state level.

“Most of the Serbs, Bosniaks (Muslims) and Croats want to become partners in European integration, want to participate in building a united Europe, and this now needs to be followed up by politics in this country,” Petritsch said.

Petritsch told AFP Friday that he was dissatisfied over continuing obstructions placed by Bosnian Serb hardliners, notably the Serb Democratic Party (SDS), in state-building efforts and said he was considering sanctions. He accused the SDS, the strongest Bosnian Serb party which is participating in the RS government, of opposing almost all state-level projects.

“Frustration is growing very rapidly … SDS leadership has to be aware that it is moving fully against all the good intentions that were

expressed several months ago. Nothing has been implemented," Petritsch told journalists Monday.

He was referring to a statement of the SDS leadership in December 2000, when they pledged to support the Dayton peace agreement that ended Bosnia's 1992-95 war, including notably the issues of refugees return, cooperation with the UN war crimes court, work with central institutions and human rights.

"This has to change rapidly, because the window of opportunity for SDS is closing very rapidly," Petritsch said, adding that the SDS should start to either act in a responsible manner or allow the "other parties to take over to do a better job in RS."

The visit comes a few days after the Republika Srpska assembly strongly criticized Serb representatives in the common institutions, saying they did not do enough to protect the interests of the RS.