

Article by Christian Schwarz-Schilling, High Representative for BiH “It Takes Two to Tango”

It Takes Two to Tango

On Tuesday, the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board extended the mandate of the Office of the High Representative until end June 2008. It did this in response to my assessment that progress made by the domestic authorities during the past 12 months in respect of their obligations under Dayton and the requirements of the European integration process fell short of what is necessary to justify closure of the OHR this year.

The Steering Board made it clear it will not tolerate any attempt to undermine Dayton; it reaffirmed the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina; and it specifically called on me to take action to ensure that the relevant authorities fulfill this country's international obligations.

Since the beginning of my mandate, I have followed a clear and consistent policy (often in the face of vitriolic criticism) of letting this country's political leaders take centre stage and solve the problems confronting Bosnia and Herzegovina in their own way. They have squandered this opportunity.

To regain the initiative, the relevant leaders – and they know who they are – must change their behaviour. They must work constructively to relaunch the constitutional reform process, complete the implementation of Dayton, and fulfill the remaining requirements for signing a Stabilisation and Association Agreement.

The PIC decision testifies to the international community's willingness to continue working in partnership with Bosnia and Herzegovina's political leaders. But it takes two to tango.

Christian Schwarz-Schilling is the international community's High Representative and European Union's Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina.