

BiH Needs Concrete Proposals Not Empty Rhetoric

Concrete proposals – not empty rhetoric – must be the substance of campaign politics leading up to the election on 1 October, High Representative and EU Special Representative Christian Schwarz-Schilling wrote in his weekly column that appeared in the BiH press today.

“Politicians have to be made to explain in detail not just *what* they plan to do but also *how* they plan to do it. Voters want solutions to problems, not time-wasting fantasies,” the High Representative/EU Special Representative wrote in an article that was published in *Dnevni avaz*, *Nezavisne novine* and *Večernji list*.

“The quality of political debate in Bosnia and Herzegovina between now and 1 October will determine the prospects of this country and its people for the next four years and beyond. It should not degenerate into empty rhetoric,” the High Representative/EU Special Representative warned. “Empty rhetoric has been the scourge of this country for much too long. You cannot *eat* rhetoric; it doesn’t create jobs; it doesn’t staff schools or equip hospitals; and it won’t secure visa-free travel to the European Union.”

The High Representative/EU Special Representative emphasised that poverty, criminality and senseless bureaucracy are the core problems that make life intolerably hard for the people of BiH and “any politician who doesn’t understand this is out of touch with his or her fellow citizens.” He stressed that the only way to develop solutions to poverty, crime and the other scourges that confront all citizens of this country is by coming forward with concrete proposals.

He added that during the election campaign politicians must be

made to explain “exactly *how* they are going to raise living standards, *what* steps they propose to take in order to attract investment and create jobs, *where* they will find extra money to spend on schools and hospitals, and *what* they will do to secure EU and NATO membership. Being *for* all of these desirable things isn’t the same as knowing how to deliver them to voters.”

The High Representative/EU Special Representative also called on candidates to make public their parties’ stance on key legislation such as the Higher Education Law, the Law on Obligations, and the Law on National Fiscal Council, all of which failed to be enacted this year because of party political manoeuvring. “Candidates now running for office found reasons to vote against these and other laws that would have helped solve major problems. They need to be held to account, to justify past actions and explain precisely how they intend to deliver on their current promises.”