Bosnia and Herzegovina Must Move Forward Under Its Own Steam

A democracy that is protected and consolidated through executive powers granted to an extraneous institution cannot develop the necessary inner strength to sustain itself, the High Representative and European Union Special Representative Christian Schwarz-Schilling stressed today, in a column published in BiH newspapers.

“IfBosnia and Herzegovina is to complete its journey to full post-war rehabilitation and Euro-Atlantic integration, it must travel the remainder of the way under its own steam,” Mr Schwarz-Schilling wrote in *Dnevni Avaz*, *Nezavisne Novine* and *Večernji List*.

The High Representative/EU Special Representative emphasised that BiH has gone as far as it can under the present structure of international engagement.

“Already two years ago, the European Union made it clear that legislation required to launch the Stabilisation and Association Agreement would only be considered acceptable if enacted by the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina on their own. It could not be imposed by the High Representative,” he wrote, adding that since then the BiH authorities have demonstrated that they do have the capacity to take the country forward.

“A swathe of difficult reform laws – including laws leading to the streamlining of the armed forces and the successful introduction of value added tax at the start of this year – have been enacted by the country’s parliamentary assemblies,” he wrote.

Mr Schwarz-Schilling also emphasised that the International Community will remain engaged through the continued presence of EUFOR, the EU Police Mission, NATO and other international actors.

“The European Union’s engagement will be reinforced, by enhancing the role of the EU Special Representative and by moving forward with the SAA process,” He wrote, stressing that he intends “to serve as High Representative until the closure of the Office and then to remain in Bosnia and Herzegovina in my other capacity, as EU Special Representative.”

Mr Schwarz-Schilling was commenting on the 23 June announcement by the Peace Implementation Council that the Office of the High Representative will be closed at the end of June 2007.

The full text of the column is available at https://www.ohr.int/ohr-dept/presso/pressa/archive.asp