

Bosnia and Herzegovina's Peace and Security Will Not Be Placed at Risk



Bonn Powers and the Office of the High Representative (OHR) should continue in some form, the High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, wrote in his weekly newspaper column, adding that he was making this argument in his discussions with decision-makers on visits to key capitals.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is still able to take a clear step forward, but the transition to domestic ownership will take more time and the international community will have to show patience, Mr Schwarz-Schilling wrote in his column, which appeared in *Večernji list*, *Nezavisne novine* and *Dnevni avaz*.

“Ever since becoming High Representative and EU Special Representative, I have sought to bring about a transition to domestic ownership in Bosnia and Herzegovina and, above all, to instil responsibility for decision-making in domestic institutions and politicians,” the High Representative and EU Special Representative wrote. “Though progress has at times been slow and frustrating, I still believe that this is the only course that leads to the European future for which the vast majority of this country’s citizens yearn.”

In order to give the international community the greatest possible range of options, Mr Schwarz-Schilling made clear to German Chancellor Angela Merkel that he would be stepping down as High Representative and EU Special Representative at the end of his mandate on 30 June in a letter after their meeting on 11 January.

“The real issue is not whether the OHR closes or whether I am

High Representative, but how quickly Bosnia and Herzegovina can move forward under its own steam towards Europe and away from Dayton ,” Mr Schwarz-Schilling wrote. “My future is incidental; the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina is paramount.”

The High Representative and EU Special Representative explained his philosophy on the use of Bonn Powers and pointed to progress that has been made by the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the context of government formation.

“Had I been systematically using the Bonn Powers, I might have been able to give an impression of progress, but it would have been a false impression. Moreover, there would be no way of establishing the reality of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina or knowing whether or not the country has the capacity to move forward without a High Representative,” Mr Schwarz-Schilling wrote.

“In the course of the past year, it has become possible to make an objective assessment of how well or how badly the country is doing and where the problems lie. And it is only by establishing the reality of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina that it is possible to develop the mechanisms to assist this country on the road to Euro-Atlantic integration.”

In the five weeks between now and the February meeting of the Peace Implementation Council, Mr Schwarz-Schilling wrote that he would continue to consult with decision-makers in PIC capitals as well as with political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina to build a consensus around the best way to help the country move forward.

In his remaining time as High Representative and EU Special Representative, Mr Schwarz-Schilling wrote that he intended to focus on assisting Bosnia and Herzegovina fulfil the key preconditions for signing a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union, taking forward

constitutional reform and ensuring that the transition to his successor is smooth and that the instruments at his or her disposal are appropriate to take Bosnia and Herzegovina forward in partnership with the international community.

The text of the High Representative/EU Special Representative's weekly column can be accessed at www.ohr.int and www.eusrbih.org.