

Interview: Christian Schwarz-Schilling, High Representative for BiH: “Complete package of constitutional amendments after elections”

In Zagreb , he discussed the Ploče Port , the mainland – Pelješac bridge and the 5C corridor – The bad picture BiH has sent to the international community must be rectified

Christian Schwarz-Schilling, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina , yesterday paid his first official visit to Zagreb since becoming the head of the OHR. He met Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, Parliament Speaker Vladimir Šeks and the Ministers of Maritime Affairs, Tourism, Traffic and Communications and Science, Education and Sports, Božidar Kalmeta and Dragan Primorac, respectively.

In an interview to «Dnevni avaz» after the meeting with Sanader and Šeks, he said that the emphasis of the talks was on future economic cooperation between the two countries.

Constituent status of Croats

– We considered issues of traffic and tourism. We discussed the Ploče Port , construction of the bridge between the mainland and the Pelješac peninsular and the 5C corridor highway where we have to maintain close cooperation. I am pleased that it was agreed earlier that the two governments would have constant dialogue on these topics in the forthcoming period. So, next week, Prime Minister Sanader will

send documentation to the BiH Government concerning these issues, and a proposal for future negotiations on open issues between the two countries will arrive to the Council of Ministers of BiH one week after that – Schwarz-Schilling said.

Dnevni Avaz: We presume that the constituent status of Croats in BiH was one of the topics with Prime Minister Sanader?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: I convinced the Croatian Prime Minister that my position with regard to this is clear and cannot be changed. All three constituent peoples in BiH must have equal rights. This is not in question. But, at the same time, I expect all the three peoples to be constructive and determined in their intentions to build BiH's structure as a functional state. Disagreements between Croat politicians in BiH do not help this process at all.

Dnevni Avaz: You are referring to dissonant tones in HDZ?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: Of course. They are now competing between themselves. And not to build a development and a future for this country. They are competing over who will get more votes in the election. I think this does not help the road BiH needs to travel. Sanader supported my position and guaranteed that he would do everything he could to overcome this situation.

Reception by Cardinal Bozanić

President of the Croatian Conference of Bishops, Zagreb 's Arch-Bishop Cardinal Josip Bozanić, received the HR yesterday, Zagreb 's Arch-Bishop's office announced and Fena reports.

Cardinal Bozanić received Schwarz-Schilling on his request. The press announcement does not give details of the talks held in the Arch- Bishop's Residence in Zagreb .

Dnevni Avaz: What is the position of official Zagreb toward

the process of constitutional reforms in BiH?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: The position of Croatia is that constitutional reforms are absolutely indispensable for BiH since they will bring about the best state organization for all three constituent peoples, which is founded on equality and protection of their vital interests.

Education system design

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: BiH can learn a lot from Croatia when it comes to education. One should learn from experiences of Croatia, how they have built up their education system in accordance with the Bologna process, and how to apply it in BiH education institutions. I believe that it will be very useful for the BiH authorities to see how their neighbors have designed their education systems. They have progressed so much that BiH has now to speed up to a maximum degree, its efforts in order to reach the level of Croatia – said Schwarz-Schilling.

Dnevni Avaz: Do you believe that constitutional amendments will be adopted before the October elections and applied to this process?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: I think that the complete set of constitutional amendments will be adopted after the elections. I do not think that it will be adopted earlier given that I expect that the parties involved will now go step by step. In any case, there is a lot we have to finish within the next three months. We have to work on regulations for the public broadcasting service, education, Central Bank, National Fiscal Council, oversight system and the like. The schedule for the next three months is rather tight without constitutional amendments.

Retrograde politics

Dnevni Avaz: How do you see the end of story about these reforms?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: That story may end in two ways. Either the BiH Parliament and the Government will constructively prepare changes to the Constitution in the months preceding the elections or the failure to implement constitutional reforms will be an indicate that BiH politics is going backwards. A bad picture that was sent to citizens, the EU and the entire international community has the view that BiH politicians are not capable of or willing to implement something that guarantees the foundations for this country's future. I hope that this will be eliminated through joint work of the Parliament and the Government of BiH.