

Interview: Christian Schwarz-Schilling, High Representative for BiH: “I WON’T IMPOSE LAWS”

I will be more an adviser than a ruler, says the new and probably the last High Representative, presenting for the first time the objectives he has placed before OHR administration.

Christian Schwarz-Schilling, former German minister, mediator and businessman, emphasized in his first interview that he would base his work, during the mandate of the High Representative, on dialogue with local political forces, rather than on imposition and pressure. In his mandate, there will not be – what he calls – OHR’s laws. If the October election brings to power ethnic parties again, he will cooperate with them unless they are extremists. That is, he says, part of democracy, the kind of democracy that could lead to a situation – if the October election goes well – that, two or three months after the election, OHR might disappear and be replaced with the EU Special Representative.

«I hope the election will pass in the best order, because in this case, the role of the High Representative would transform into an EU Special Representative, probably two or three months after the October election. I can’t really now predict whether that would happen because I don’t know how things will go from now till October. However, I don’t believe there would be great problems which would extend the OHR mandate. Our mandate, in case of a positive outcome, would essentially change, of course, if the SAA negotiations end successfully and we achieve success on the BiH road to NATO’s PfP program»,

Schilling says.

NN: What will be your primary priority?

SCHWARZ-SCHILLING: First of all, October elections. They will have to be administered in a fully transparent and regular way so that citizens could recognize essential messages of the parties taking part in them.

NN: Your predecessor promised jobs and justice. What do you promise?

SCHWARZ-SCHILLING: I promise I will put in maximum efforts to help and support those who are responsible and who exercise competencies in BiH. After all, it is not OHR's responsibility to run this country, but theirs. First of all, I would like to advise them how to do all the tasks before us. In this context, I will have an intensive dialogue with the civil society and try to establish a dialogue in order for us all to gather around common objectives. Economy, small companies and agriculture represent an important part of this country and, talking to entrepreneurs, workers, trade unions, I would like to push the economy forward. I do not want to theorize on economic philosophy, but primarily work in practice. I will also cooperate with the financial community since the issue of credit is very important.

NN: Since you were a businessman in Germany for many years, did you perhaps – considering this experience – prepare for BiH some sort of a «Marshall Plan» for recovery of the failing economy?

SCHWARZ-SCHILLING: First of all, we need innovations in economy, but *you* must decide what you will do. I would like to start the process with bringing innovative ideas into people's minds, and also to create a support network for this objective throughout Europe. I also want to open up the possibility of joint business endeavors. Still, it is *you* first who must start micro economy. I think any Marshall Plan will come in a

later stage, because, before that, you must know what the needs of micro economy are. Only after that could we address the issue of macro economy.

NN: Nevertheless, we are much more talking about the Constitution here. How do you see the negotiations so far and announcements regarding the changes to the Constitution?

SCHWARZ-SCHILLING: I am pleased with the constitutional change talks. Certain progress has been achieved and I hope it will result with the signing of an agreement, a better one than what we have had so far. As far as further constitutional talks process is concerned, it will, primarily, be oriented towards the needs of reform in the context of meeting EU criteria. Therefore, we need to enhance the rule of law, economy, social conditions. In parallel with that, SAA negotiations are also ongoing and BiH politicians must show whether they are capable of meeting all requirements of the European Commission. They must offer a good solution in order for the talks to end. If they fail in doing so, they will have to offer a program of further changes to the Constitution. This does not mean there will have to be changes if they find a solution within the current system. Still, if this does not happen, they will have to work on the Constitution step by step.

NN: The SDA leader claims that the Entity set-up of BiH is not permanent. In your opinion, can BiH go into European integration with two Entities?

SCHWARZ-SCHILLING: There must be one partner to negotiate with the EU. As you see yourself, there are many different state set-ups in the EU; federal in my country, Germany, centralised in France ... However, they are all partners in the EU. If BiH politicians can do that with the Entity set-up, then it is fine. If, on the other hand, they cannot do it with this set-up, then they will have to change it. In any case, the decision is up to BiH politicians.

NN: Although you advocate a «softer style» than that of Ashdown, you recently drew attention to yourself saying that you are a Scorpio in the Zodiac and know how to sting, alluding to the Bonn powers. Do you believe that you will have room for stings during your mandate?

SCHWARZ-SCHILLING: Of course, this depends on the behavior of BiH politicians. I will surely use my mandate fully in case peace or the Dayton framework are at risk, or in case of a situation related to war crimes. It is clear I would use the Bonn powers in that case. Still, I will not be using them to intervene with adoption of legislation in the Parliament. I will not impose lightly any OHR laws. Dialogue will be very important in my mandate. My persuasive powers in dialogue can be more useful than the whole powers of the High Representative. This goes for all other administrative issues, too. So, we will be conducting dialogue without prior use of the Bonn powers. Because, how can BiH be a real partner to the EU if it is a protectorate at the same time. I cannot sit at both sides of the table.

NN: Your predecessor was often criticized for cooperation with nationalistic parties. Are you going to cooperate with them if they win a sufficient number of votes in the October elections to form a government?

SCHWARZ-SCHILLING: I must honour the results of the elections, no matter what they are, because citizens will make their decision in the elections. I will not cooperate with them only if they are extremists who would want to violate the Constitution, human rights and the peace framework of Dayton. However, if these parties stay within the democratic framework and are elected at the same time by the citizens, we must honour that for sure.