

Interview: Christian Schwarz-Schilling, High Representative for BiH

Nedeljni Telegraf: Does the Resolution signal a gradual annulment of entities in Bosnia-Herzegovina?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has made an important contribution to the Constitutional reform discussion that is going on in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the moment and it underlines that this issue must be addressed as a top priority after the elections.

But what is clear is that Constitutional Reform in BiH will require broad support to be successful and using elements of this recommendation, out of context, and to create tension, ahead of the elections is irresponsible and will contribute nothing to securing BiH's Euro-Atlantic future.

Nedeljni Telegraf: Is the Resolution a binding document or only a suggestion?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: BiH is a member of the Council of Europe and States should not pick and choose what elements they might like or not like. At the same time BiH is a sovereign state and it is clear that any changes to BiH's constitution can only come from within BiH, not from Strasbourg or elsewhere.

Nedeljni Telegraf: Does this document mean the annulment of the Dayton Treaty?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: No. But it is one more sign that it is time for Bosnia and Herzegovina to move beyond peace

implementation towards Euro-Atlantic integration.

Bosnia and Herzegovina 's post-war recovery has entered a new phase, which is a logical consequence of the phases that have gone before and represents a progression, not a change of direction.

Now Bosnia and Herzegovina must take decisive steps to rationalise and consolidate the country's institutions, ensure its economic viability and take it further along the path of Euro-Atlantic integration.

Nedeljni Telegraf: How do you see the future of Bosnia-Herzegovina in view of the newest developments?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: What is important is how BiH citizens see BiH. And the challenge facing the authorities of the country is to make this sovereign state fully functional and integrate it more deeply with the rest of Europe. If Bosnia and Herzegovina aspires to Euro-Atlantic integration, it has to take control of its own destiny.

Ten-and-a-half years since the Dayton Peace Agreement ended the war, it is time for Bosnia and Herzegovina to move beyond peace implementation towards Euro-Atlantic integration.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's post-war recovery has entered a new phase, which is a logical consequence of the phases that have gone before and represents a progression – this isn't a change of direction it's moving to improve the live of every citizen in BiH.

Nedeljni Telegraf: According to you, what are the possibilities of Bosnia-Herzegovina joining EU?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: The EU has made a significant commitment here and I'm sure they will see the job through.

How quickly this happens will only be decided by Bosnia and Herzegovina's politicians.

BiH has made significant progress to being given formal candidacy status: the final step is to sign the Stabilisation and Association agreement, but before BiH can do that the EC wants to see progress on Police reform, a finalised agreement being passed by BiH's parliaments.

Ultimately the real reason for politicians to speed up reform is not to fulfil this or that requirement set out by international community, but because by accelerating reforms, BiH's Politicians accelerate improvements in living conditions and make life better and more secure for the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina – the impetus here comes from BiH 's citizens.

Nedeljni Telegraf: Could revoking the entities cause unrest in Bosnia-Herzegovina? If that happens, what would be your course of action?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: In this pre-election period you might get the impression, from Serb leaders in particular, that the Entities could be dissolved against the will of BiH's Serbs. This is a pre-election "patka". The simple fact is that this could only happen were all BiH's peoples, including the Serbs, to agree to this.