

Lajčák: BiH must demonstrate its commitment to the EU



“Bosnia and Herzegovina must meet any EU conditionality of its own volition and thereby prove that it wants to be part of the European Union”, the High Representative and EU Special Representative told a conference on BiH’s European perspective in Vienna today.

The adoption of policing laws last week has set the country on the long-awaited path of EU integration. “The signing of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement in the coming weeks will clearly move BiH forward, but there are still a number of key benchmarks that need to be completed before OHR can transition into EUSR”, Lajčák said.

The High Representative and EU Special Representative recalled that the Peace Implementation Council had identified five main issues that need to be addressed in the short term: apportionment of state property, resolution of defence property, completion of the Brčko Final Award, fiscal sustainability and entrenchment of the rule of law. In addition, two further conditions need to be met for transition: SAA signature and a positive assessment of the political situation in BiH by the PIC Steering board.

Whilst progress has been made in meeting the conditions for SAA signature, much work remains to be done to achieve a positive assessment of the situation in BiH. Continuing negative rhetoric by politicians, which fosters “a permissive environment of mutual provocation”, remains an impediment to further progress on the reform agenda, Lajčák said.

The key challenge is to ensure that European integration does not become a collateral damage to nationalism. The EU must remain firm in its commitment to the region, and consistent in its approach, with clear rewards for completing each step in the EU integration process. "The citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina have been waiting a long time, they deserve no less but than to secure their country's future as soon as possible", Lajčák concluded.