

Lajčak: Economic and Social Council Will Help Tackle Unemployment, Poverty



Government, employers and trades unions in Bosnia and Herzegovina must start to recognise one another as legitimate partners who should be consulted on issues of economic and social policy, the High Representative and EU Special Representative, Miroslav Lajčak, said on Thursday. He stressed that the three parties to a constructive social and economic dialogue must interact “not simply as a courtesy” but should view one another as “a political and practical resource.”

Ambassador Lajčak expressed confidence that a BiH Economic and Social Council will be established in the coming months. When they signed the Platform for Action last October the three prime ministers made a commitment to support initiatives and forums for constructive dialogue among policymakers, employers and workers.

“The process of social dialogue will become increasingly important as the country progresses in the EU accession process,” Ambassador Lajčak said. “A continuous and effective dialogue on social and economic strategies is central to achieving the twin objective of lower unemployment and higher living standards, because the social dialogue creates mechanisms to help regulate all fields of the labour and employment sector.”

He stressed that “developing a social dialogue is not something that has to be done simply for its own sake or because it represents some sort of mysterious Brussels ‘requirement’. The plain fact is that this dialogue has a central role in EU economies because it works. It facilitates dispute resolution and enhances the capacity of all stakeholders – employers, workers and government – to contribute in a constructive way to economic output. At the same time, it helps to safeguard the rights of stakeholders, facilitating, for example, agreements and standards in regard to wages, gender equality and safety at work.”

Ambassador Lajčák pointed out that “the sooner we get the stakeholders’ dialogue on social and economic strategies in this country up to EU standards the sooner we will be able turn the corner in terms of securing more and better jobs for citizens and raising living standards – and, as I am sure we can all agree, that can’t be soon enough.”

The High Representative/EUSR was speaking in Sarajevo at a conference on social dialogue and social and economic development organized by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, the Eduardo Frei Foundation and the Centre for Regional Development.