

Lajčák: BiH...



Lajčák: BiH will not get a blank cheque from the European Union

“The EU does not issue blank cheques, neither when it comes to joining the EU, nor when it comes to visa free access”, High Representative and EU Special Representative Miroslav Lajčák warned today in Brussels, where he addressed a BiH-EU interparliamentary meeting and participated in a meeting between EU High Representative Javier Solana and BiH Presidency Chair Nebojša Radmanović.

Instead of advancing on the EU agenda and addressing relevant conditions, political leaders have engaged in mutual accusations based on nationalism and fear-mongering, which have frozen progress, Lajčák told parliamentarians from the EU and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Lajčák pointed out that “negative and confrontational political messages” have led to delays and stalemate in many key areas: visa liberalisation, meeting European Partnership priorities and appointing a new Director for European Integration.

“There is a clear discrepancy between the proclaimed commitment and concrete actions by the political leaders and the respective institutions”, Lajčák said. “Nevertheless, I am convinced that the institutions are capable of making significant progress on the priorities for 2009, if politicians are able to avoid negative and confrontational rhetoric or actions, and focus on the benefits to citizens.

However, in this regard a sea change in the political life will be necessary."

Speaking of the tasks that await Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2009, Lajčák stressed that the two outstanding objectives for the transition from OHR to the EUSR must be the key priority in the months to come. "A resolution to the state property question and finding a sustainable solution on Brcko will demonstrate that the political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina are ready to take decisions about essential issues for this country. It difficult to imagine that a country which is not able to reach agreement on these issues can be considered mature enough for EU membership."

The Prud Agreement, as a welcome and important positive step, must be translated into concrete legislative initiatives. At the same time, a serious and coordinated approach to tackle the European Partnership priorities is necessary. The coming months also provide a unique window of opportunity to start addressing the much needed constitutional reform.

"The year 2009 will be absolutely critical in determining whether or not Bosnia and Herzegovina stays on the path of European integration, or drops out of the group of Western Balkan countries moving towards the EU", Lajčák told parliamentarians from the EU and BiH.

During his visit to Brussels, the High Representative and EU Special Representative also met with senior officials from the Council of the European Union and the European Commission.