

OHR's Statement at the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference in Banja Luka

The HR/EUSR to meet Olli Rehn

High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, will meet with Olli Rehn, the European Commissioner for Enlargement, in Sarajevo tomorrow to discuss BiH's progress in meeting the criteria for signing a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union.

<?XML:NAMESPACE PREFIX = O />

A key condition for signing the SAA is, of course, police reform. In an effort to make progress on this issue, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, and Principal Deputy High Representative Raffi Gregorian held a series of consultations with party leaders over the last few days. During the talks, the international community made clear that parties must adhere to the commitments made in the October 2005 Political Agreement, and specifically to the three EU principles, in order to fulfil the requirements for signing an SAA.

If no progress is achieved in the coming days and weeks, BiH will suffer significant delays in its effort to establish closer ties with the European Union. It will also continue to fall behind other countries in the region. Today, Montenegro will initial an SAA with the European Union. (The former Yugoslav Republic of) Macedonia has already been granted candidate status, and Croatia is making quick progress on the way to full membership.

This shows that the European Union will reward all those who have the necessary political will to meet the challenges of EU integration. The citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina must not be left lagging behind their neighbours. Time is running out!