

Schwarz-Schilling: Directorate Report Paves Way for Successful Police Reform

The High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling thanked the Steering Board of the Directorate for Police Restructuring (the Directorate) for completing its report stressing that this document paves the way for successful police reform.

“Despite the obstacles put in their way, Bosnia and Herzegovina’s police experts have completed their task professionally and conscientiously,” Mr Schwarz-Schilling said today. “This report now forms the basis for taking this essential reform forward.”

The Directorate will now officially forward the Proposal of the Plan for Implementation of Reform of Police Structures (Implementation Plan) to the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

“Guided by the three principles laid down by the European Union, the Directorate conducted its deliberations on the basis of consensus and compromise. My assessment is that this report fully meets the requirements of the Political Agreement of October 2005,” Mr Schwarz-Schilling said.

The European Union has stipulated, and the RS, Federation and BiH parliaments have agreed, that all legislative and budgetary competencies for all police matters be vested at the state level; that there can be no political interference in the operational work of police; and that functional local police areas must be determined by technical policing criteria.

The next phase of this reform, according to the Political Agreement of 5 October 2005, is governmental and parliamentary adoption of the implementation plan. This means that Bosnia and Herzegovina's politicians must now carefully consider the report and find solutions that are compliant with the three EU principles. The HR/EUSR underlined that the report provides flexibility and is a good basis for achieving progress on implementing police reform in a way acceptable to all.

The European Commission has made it clear that police reform is one of the main requirements for the conclusion of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union.

Last week, the European Council reaffirmed its commitment to the region. EU Heads of State and Government underlined that they would apply strict conditionality when looking at each country's track record. "The pace of the accession process depends on the results of reform in the negotiating country," they concluded.

"Police reform in BiH must be a real reform," Mr Schwarz-Schilling said. "The Directorate has laid down a solid basis for a reform that will make policing in Bosnia and Herzegovina more effective and that strengthens its connections to the citizens of this country. The International Community stands ready to assist them."