

Schwarz-Schilling Pays Tribute To SAA Negotiators, Urges Police Reform

The High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, today paid tribute to the authorities on the successful completion of the technical negotiations aimed at signing a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the European Union.

“I have been impressed by the highly professional approach of the negotiating team and would like to extend my congratulations to Igor Davidovic in particular and Osman Topcagic and Lidija Topic for the leadership and integrity they have displayed in the negotiations,” the Mr Schwarz-Schilling said today.

The SAA would establish a clear framework within which Bosnia and Herzegovina could move forward on its path to full Euro-Atlantic integration.

“The work that has been successfully completed brings us measurably closer to signing a Stabilisation and Association Agreement,” the High Representative/EU Special Representative said.

The European Union has repeatedly made it clear that progress on a number of reforms is necessary for completing the SAA process and that police restructuring –consistent with the three principles that were accepted by the State and Entity parliaments last year – is key.

The three principles are the following: all legislative and budgetary competencies for all police matters must be vested at the state level; there can be no political interference in

the operational work of the police; and functional local police areas must be determined by technical policing criteria

The final session of the Police Restructuring Directorate has been scheduled for 22 December, when the Directorate should formally approve its *Proposed Plan for Implementation of Police Reform* and forward it to the Council of Ministers.

The next phase is the adoption of the proposed plan by governments and legislatures. According to last year's 5 October political agreement, this should take place no later than 2 March 2007.

Last week, the Peace Implementation Council's Steering Board renewed its call for constructive talks among the political parties in order to facilitate the work of the Directorate and adoption of the Directorate's proposals.

"This process must move forward if Bosnia and Herzegovina is to join the other countries in the region on the path to Europe," the High Representative and EU Special Representative said. "The parties will need to consider carefully the Directorate's report. There is a basis for agreement if the necessary political will is applied to this crucial element in Bosnia and Herzegovina's recovery and normalisation."