

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

Parliamentarians Will Open Or Close Highway to Europe

The High Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, ahead of the continuation of the BiH House of Representatives session today said that "the need to modify the BiH constitution, to equip the country for the demands of EU integration and to better serve the citizens is one that will not go away: the choice the BiH Parliamentarians face is to move forward now or to delay any progress for another four years. It is disappointing that they did not take the opportunity to do this last night. "

The High Representative said delegates in the House of Representative must ask themselves a simple question: "Can BiH afford another delay?" If this is not passed today, the rest of the International Community will ask themselves "Why is BiH not willing to move forward?"

"This agreement is an important step towards making Bosnia and Herzegovina a more functional state," the High Representative said, "but it is only a first step. Constitutional reform is a process, not an event. There will be a Phase II but not without a successfully completed Phase I."

The proposed changes will help equip BiH for EU integration, which requires quick and effective adoption and implementation of a large number of laws. BiH also needs more effective and efficient government in order to increase the pace of reform, particularly in the economic sector.

"The ability to take tough decisions is a sign of political

maturity and it was clear from my meetings in Brussels that the EU is watching to see if BiH can make progress here or not. Failure to make progress will send a very negative signal to the International Community, and to the citizens of Bosnia Hercegovina ,” the High Representative said.