

Remarks by the High Representative and EU Special Representative for BiH, Christian Schwarz-Schilling at the press briefing following the PIC meeting

14:45 Press Conference, Justus Lipsius Building , "Europa" press room

Thank you for being here.

The PIC Steering Board has just finished its meeting and we will shortly issue our communiqué outlining the key points of our discussions.

As I said earlier, our discussions have been extremely useful.

The main areas of discussion were transition and the reform agenda, in particular those reforms necessary to sign a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union.

As you are aware, this was the last meeting of PIC Steering Board ahead of the discussion in February next year when Political Directors will meet to review their decision to close the Office of the High Representative as planned in June 2007.

In reviewing their decision to close the OHR, Political Directors would be assessing carefully the situation in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region.

Leaders of all political parties represented in the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina were present at today's meeting.

Political Directors emphasised to them the importance of building coalitions and forming governments both to live up to their responsibilities to the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina who elected them and to be able to enact key reforms for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union.

More than two months after the 1 October elections, governments at the State and Federation level are yet to be formed and the reform process is blocked.

Political Directors also urged Bosnia and Herzegovina's political leaders to focus on the key reforms necessary for the SAA and especially on police reform, since, as the European Commission pointed out, it will only recommend conclusion of the SAA once there has been agreement on police reform.

The Police Reform Directorate is currently finalising its report.

Political Directors believed that the proposals developed so far by the Police Reform Directorate provide a sound basis for real, lasting reform of the police in line with the three EU principles.

The Steering Board called for constructive talks among the political parties in order to facilitate the work of the Directorate and adoption of its proposals.

Political Directors congratulated Bosnia and Herzegovina on its invitation to join NATO's Partnership-for-Peace Programme. They also pointed out that PfP membership brings with it additional obligations and responsibilities.

The authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially in Republika Srpska, must meet their international and Dayton obligations to cooperate fully with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

This means playing a proactive role in apprehending all indicted war criminals, especially Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, and in dismantling their support networks.

We also discussed the importance of constitutional reform to provide the country with an effective structure that would allow Bosnia and Herzegovina to take the decisions necessary to meet the requirements of Euro-Atlantic integration.

The Steering Board continues to stand behind the early adoption of the first package of constitutional amendments agreed by the six political parties in March. This offers a positive first step in a longer-term process that will help Bosnia and Herzegovina meet the requirements of European integration.

The Steering Board also expressed support for both my work and that of the United States to facilitate constitutional reform, and welcomed the commitment of the European Union and the United States to work together to support a further phase of constitutional reform.

If you have any questions, I will be happy to answer them.