

Schwarz-Schilling Briefs Chancellor Merkel on Bosnia and Herzegovina

The High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, briefed German Chancellor and EU Council President Angela Merkel on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina in a bilateral meeting in Berlin today.

Chancellor Merkel and Mr Schwarz-Schilling discussed the transition from an Office of the High Representative (OHR) to the EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the country's capacity to function without day-to-day support from the OHR in advance of the next meeting of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) on 26 and 27 February.

The PIC is to review its decision to close the OHR at the end of June this year at that meeting, which takes place in Brussels.

During the meeting, Mr Schwarz-Schilling stressed the importance of providing assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina as the country seeks to reform its constitution. This should be a Bosnia and Herzegovina-led process, supported by both the European Union and the United States.

The High Representative and EU Special Representative also made clear agreement on police reform was the key to the signing of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the European Union.

"The signing of the SAA would be a major step, with tangible benefits for the entire country, including an improved investment climate," he said.

In the course of the meeting, Chancellor Merkel and Mr

Schwarz-Schilling also discussed the situation throughout the wider region, which will also be a factor in the PIC's February decision.

After meeting with Chancellor Merkel, the High Representative and EU Special Representative met with Erich Stather, the State Secretary at the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

This afternoon, Mr Schwarz-Schilling holds talks with senior German government officials, including Reinhard Silberberg, the State Secretary at the German Foreign Ministry. These meetings are also an opportunity to discuss Bosnia and Herzegovina 's relations with the European Union.

Berlin has made developing the European Union's relations with the countries of the Western Balkans one of its foreign-policy priorities during its six-month Presidency of the European Union.