

Schwarz-Schilling: Compromise and Reform or Throw Away Golden Opportunity



The choice facing Bosnia and Herzegovina's leaders is stark, the High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, wrote in his weekly newspaper column. Compromise, reform and integrate in the European mainstream – or throw away a golden opportunity.

The article appeared in *Dnevni avaz*, *Nezavisne novine* and *Večernji list* on the day that two of Europe's most influential officials – Olli Rehn, the European Union's Commissioner for Enlargement, and Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, NATO's Secretary General – visited Bosnia and Herzegovina.

“By now I believe everyone in Bosnia and Herzegovina understands that the country cannot make further progress towards membership of the European Union and NATO – two outcomes that the vast majority of citizens fervently want and desperately need – unless its political leaders abandon zero-sum politics and return to the kind of constructive engagement with one another that has delivered positive results in recent years,” Mr Schwarz-Schilling wrote.

The High Representative and EU Special Representative pointed out that the record of the past year is not good. “Although Bosnia and Herzegovina was invited to join NATO's Partnership-for-Peace programme at the Alliance's Riga Summit, and although its EU negotiating team successfully concluded the technical groundwork for the signing of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union, the reform process stalled ahead of the elections last year as key political leaders reverted to the aggressive yet arid rhetoric

of the 1990s," he wrote.

"Bosnia and Herzegovina secured membership of NATO's Partnership-for-Peace programme after it had successfully launched and substantially implemented ambitious defence reforms," he continued. "These reforms are not yet complete.

"To take just one example, property still has to be transferred to the Defence Ministry so that it can discharge its fundamental duty of ensuring the peace and security of the country and its people. And among the principles set out in the PfP basic documents is a binding commitment to honour international treaty obligations, which means full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY)."

Mr Schwarz-Schilling also pointed out that if Bosnia and Herzegovina wants to join NATO it will have to take defence reform much, much further initially within the framework of the Partnership for Peace and eventually that of the Membership Action Plan, a tailored programme that helps countries prepare themselves for membership.

"In the case of the European Union, signing a Stabilisation and Association Agreement would, quite simply, launch the integration process," he wrote. "As everyone knows, Commissioner Rehn had hoped to be in a position to initial an SAA. As everyone also knows, this is conditional on police restructuring, public broadcasting reform, public administration reform and ICTY cooperation."

The High Representative and EU Special Representative explained that each of these initiatives is designed to distance Bosnia and Herzegovina from a failed past and bring it into the European mainstream.

"If fundamental changes are successfully introduced in the police service, the armed forces, the public broadcasting system and elsewhere, so as to meet EU and NATO standards,

citizens in this country will be able to begin living in a way that is comparable to that enjoyed by citizens elsewhere on the continent," he wrote.

Mr Schwarz-Schilling contrasted the fact that Commissioner Rehn initialled an SAA with Montenegro yesterday with the lack of progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina . "This step demonstrates that the European Union is serious about including all countries in Southeastern Europe. But this also means that Bosnia and Herzegovina risks becoming the only country in the region lacking a formal contractual relationship with the European Union," he wrote.

The High Representative and EU Special Representative concluded by warning that " Bosnia and Herzegovina risks falling behind all its neighbours and even behind countries that its citizens would once have resented being compared to."

The text of the High Representative/EU Special Representative's [weekly column](#) can be accessed at www.ohr.int and www.eusrbih.org.