

Schwarz-Schilling: Police Reform Agreement only if Fear and Apprehension Overcome



Agreement on police reform will only be reached if political leaders overcome fear and apprehension, find common ground and put a restructuring plan in place, the High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christina Schwarz-Schilling said today.

The High Representative and EU Special Representative was talking at the official launch of a public information campaign aimed at improving mutual trust between citizens and police, sponsored by the EU Police Mission, together with the Head of the EU Police Mission, General Vincenzo Coppola, RS Police Director Uros Pena and Sarajevo Canton Police Commissioner Himza Selimovic.

In his address, Mr Schwarz-Schilling contrasted the work of police professionals and their political leaders. "Bosnia and Herzegovina's police professionals are clearly able to work together effectively, even when their political leaders cannot.

"They also know what needs to be done to build effective policing," he continued. "Indeed, they demonstrated this in preparing the Police Reform Directorate Report that provides a sound basis for police reform, even though political leaders are yet to adopt it."

The High Representative and EU Special Representative pointed out that the vast majority of people in Bosnia and Herzegovina wanted more effective policing, which was also a key element of the country's journey to the European Union, without which there would be no European future. "That is something that this country's political leaders need to keep hearing," he said.

Mr Schwarz-Schilling said that he was often asked "Who is responsible for delaying Bosnia and Herzegovina's road to the European Union?" or "Who does not accept the three EU principles?"

In response, he suggested that the relevant politicians should step forward and answer his questions using one of the polygraph machines that was part of the campaign. "I hope then we'll get a straight answer," he said.

The High Representative and EU Special Representative made clear that policing was above all about creating a safer and better place to live and that a modern police force made a huge contribution to the overall well-being of the community it serves. "That is why the confidence that ordinary people have in their police is paramount," he said.

"But policing is not just about the police," he continued. "We are all responsible for the community in which we live. We are not simply residents, onlookers or, in the worst case, victims. We all need to become engaged and to work together."

General Coppola also addressed police reform and the work of police professionals. "I have personally worked with my colleagues, the police experts of this country, on the preparation of what I consider to be a good starting point for the establishment of a modern police force," he said. "I regret that to date this country's political leaders have failed to agree on sustainable police reform in line with the EU principles."

General Coppola described his goal as helping set up a strong, efficient and democratic police force that will be respected by society. "We want professional police officers who proudly serve citizens regardless of whether they work in Doboj, Sarajevo or Capljina, he said.

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