

Schwarz-Schilling Television Address: No Change in International Policy; Transition Remains Goal



Although the Peace Implementation Council decided this week that the Office of the High Representative should remain open for another year, there has been no change in international policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, the High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, told viewers of Bosnia and Herzegovina's public broadcasters.

"Transition remains the goal, and ownership remains the guiding principle," Mr Schwarz-Schilling said in a television address broadcast on BTTV1, *Federalna Televizija* and RTRS on the evening of 2 March.

"It was my hope and expectation that it would be possible to close the OHR this summer, as Bosnia and Herzegovina moved beyond peace implementation towards Euro-Atlantic integration," the High Representative and EU Special Representative said. "Unfortunately, this was not the case."

"Though Bosnia and Herzegovina has made progress, the country's political leaders have not assumed full responsibility for completing the process of Dayton implementation and fulfilling the remaining requirements

necessary for the signing of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement,” Mr Schwarz-Schilling continued. “At the same time, developments in the region have also had a negative impact.”

For this reason, the Peace Implementation Council decided in Brussels on Tuesday to follow Mr Schwarz-Schilling’s advice and extend the mandate of the Office of the High Representative until June next year. There would be two reviews before that date.

The High Representative and EU Special Representative urged political leaders to seize the opportunity in front of them and take responsibility for the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina. “They must move away from unrealistic and unhelpful postures that deliver nothing to their constituents,” he said.

Mr Schwarz-Schilling also made clear that the signing of an SAA with the European Union is the number one priority. “Clearly, police reform is a key element in this regard. The citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina should expect political leaders to deliver on this issue,” he said. “Results must be achieved by mid-March, if a significant delay in the SAA is to be avoided. There is not time to waste.”

The High Representative also set out another key task for the remainder of his mandate, which ends on 30 June. “In the coming months, I will also work to set in place a constitutional reform process to help equip Bosnia and Herzegovina with the institutions and structures it needs to become a modern and efficient state,” he said.

Concerning this week’s judgment of the International Court of Justice, Mr Schwarz-Schilling said: “All must acknowledge that terrible crimes were committed and that genocide occurred in Srebrenica. I realise that some are disappointed by the verdict, but this is an opportunity to come to terms with the past and work towards reconciliation.”

“The future of the OHR as well as my future have been the focus of the news this week. But it is your future that counts,” Mr Schwarz-Schilling continued. “The future of Bosnia and Herzegovina is in Europe, and the sooner this country becomes part of the EU accession process the sooner its citizens will be able to enjoy the benefits enjoyed by citizens elsewhere on the continent.”

“The extension of the OHR’s mandate offers a second opportunity to ensure that the transition process is successful,” Mr Schwarz-Schilling concluded. “Let us work together to ensure that it is seized.”

The [text](#) of the High Representative/EU Special Representative as well as an electronic version ([audio/video](#)) can be found at www.ohr.int and www.eusrbih.org.