

Schwarz-Schilling Television Address on PIC Decision



Good evening.

In Brussels this week, the Peace Implementation Council decided to extend the mandate of the Office of the High Representative until June next year.

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.

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. At the same time, developments in the region have also had a negative impact.

The Peace Implementation Council has therefore followed my advice and decided to extend the OHR's mandate for another year until June 2008, with two reviews before that date.

This does not signal a change in international policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. Transition remains the goal, and ownership remains the guiding principle.

Your political leaders must 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.

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.

Results must be achieved by mid-March, if a significant delay in the SAA is to be avoided. There is not time to waste.

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. This will be done as a joint effort of the European Union and the United States.

The PIC also took note of this week's judgment of the International Court of Justice. 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. 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.

I will continue to work for these goals until the end of my mandate.

The extension of the OHR's mandate offers a second opportunity to ensure that the transition process is successful. Let us work together to ensure that it is seized.

Thank you.