

Speech by the High Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, at a Conference on Public Administration Reform

Organised by the BiH Council of Ministers and the European Commission

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The meetings of the Peace Implementation Council that are taking place today and tomorrow in Sarajevo are extremely important.

They are important because they are about the future of this country.

They are about the transition from peace implementation to Euro-Atlantic integration.

They are about ownership and about responsibility, that is the responsibility of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the future of this country.

More than eleven years after the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina it is in the interest of all and especially in the interest of the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the international community to step back.

This is an opportunity for Bosnia and Herzegovina that needs to be seized so that this country takes its rightful place in Europe's mainstream with European standards and European expectations.

Today, we are discussing Public Administration Reform.

This means, first and foremost, service – the services that the citizen in Bosnia and Herzegovina receives from the Post Office, from local government, from the Education Ministry, from the Vehicle Licensing Authority, and from every other section of the public administration.

Do citizens of this country receive satisfactory service?

Do citizens of this country receive service that is up to European standards?

I think we know the answer that most citizens would give to these questions.

Public Administration Reform means creating a system that delivers efficient and timely service to citizens.

It also means economy. The present civil service in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not only very large and inefficient; it is very expensive.

Public Administration Reform is about giving citizens value for money – streamlining the number of departments at every level of government and organising departments and functions to eliminate overlap. The object is to produce more services and better services for the same amount of money.

These things cannot be achieved by waving a magic wand. They are demanding and difficult.

This is why I welcome today's presentation of the National Public Administration Reform Strategy. This is an important and a substantial first step in defining what must be done and charting a practical way forward.

Now we know *what* we have to do, we must set about doing it!

In calling for reform in this country, I often feel lonely.

What counts are actions, not words.

Hard choices have to be made in the coming months and years in order to implement the National Public Administration Reform Strategy.

Those choices will be made easier if everyone understands that the object of the exercise is to deliver better, European-standard services to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Although I indicated at the beginning of my remarks that the nature of the international presence in this country is changing, I should make clear that the international community is not about to leave this country.

In addition to being High Representative, I am the EU Special Representative.

As EU Special Representative, I can tell you that the European engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina will increase in the coming years.

My team and I are staying in Bosnia and Herzegovina to assist the reform process in all areas, including Public Administration Reform, to prepare Bosnia and Herzegovina for Euro-Atlantic integration and make it a “normal” European country.

Thank you