

Statement by the High Representative and European Union Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling



In recent weeks, I have been consulting with capitals on the future of OHR and the Bonn Powers. Above all, I have discussed this issue with German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

After in-depth consideration, I have increasingly come to the conclusion that the situation in the region and in Bosnia and Herzegovina means that the Bonn Powers and OHR should continue in some form. This is the view I have presented to capitals and will continue to present.

At the same time, it is crucial that Bosnia and Herzegovina continues on its path towards the European Union and that the European Union intensifies its engagement in this country. I expect that the profile of the European Union will be raised through a new office of the EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I shall continue to consult with capitals and with Bosnian leaders in preparation of the decision to be taken by the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board at the end of February.

At the same time, I would like to stress the importance of making progress on constitutional reform for the future of

this country.

There must be a broad-based process in place to enable Bosnia and Herzegovina to continue to reform its constitution step by step. The international community should provide technical and financial assistance, to enable the process to include all sectors of Bosnian society, relevant experts, and give the Parliament the capacity to play a central role.

The international community, both Europe and the United States , must work closely together to propose comprehensive support so that the Bosnian leaders and citizens can take this forward.

It is clear from the meetings that I have held so far, that my arguments are striking a chord in the capitals and gaining support. We are all determined to ensure that Bosnia and Herzegovina remains stable, and able to continue on its path towards Europe.

Transition is still possible in 2007. That means there can be a fresh start in the middle of this year. Following my talk with Chancellor Merkel on 11 January, I wrote to inform her that I would not seek an extension of my mandate beyond 30 June this year.

The PIC is the relevant decision-making body, and all decisions relating to the mandate and individuals concerned will be taken by the PIC Steering Board Meeting at the end of February.

I will ensure that the transition proceeds smoothly.

I am confident that my arguments will prevail. What matters is the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina , not that of myself as an individual.