Time to Ask What Bosnia and Herzegovina Can Do for Europe

Bosnia and Herzegovina is critical to stability in the Western Balkans, but the people and leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina should understand that this is not enough to put their country at the top of the list of EU foreign-policy priorities, the High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, wrote in his weekly newspaper column.

“To move closer to the top, Bosnia and Herzegovina must make itself relevant. And it can only do that by engaging in Europe’s strategic issues in a constructive, confident and proactive way,” Mr Schwarz-Schilling wrote in his column, which appeared in *Večernji list, Nezavisne novine* and *Dnevni avaz* the day after he met with German Chancellor and EU President Angela Merkel.

At that meeting, Chancellor Merkel made clear that the Western Balkans will be one of Germany’s priorities as EU President and that Germany is committed to assisting Bosnia and Herzegovina and the other countries of the region on the path towards European integration.

“If Bosnia and Herzegovina were able to sign a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union during the German Presidency, that would be a major milestone,” Mr Schwarz-Schilling wrote.

But Germany’s EU Presidency has other priorities too, which also affect Bosnia and Herzegovina as an aspiring member of the Union and European neighbour. Germany is acutely aware of the importance of reaching an acceptable solution for the status of Kosovo, which will enhance stability in the region and allow the Western Balkans to look towards a brighter,

European future.

Other priorities for the German EU Presidency include developing a new energy policy to suit the demands of the changing situation for the European Union; agreeing a new European Constitution to ensure the European Union functions effectively and efficiently for all its current and future members; combating terrorism and international organised crime; ensuring the European Union's enlargement policy is managed constructively for both those already in the EU family, and those aspiring to join; and championing peace and democracy around the world.

The High Representative and EU Special Representative cited US President John F Kennedy urging his compatriots to "ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country" pointing out that: "It is in the material and strategic interest of every single person in Bosnia and Herzegovina to emulate this – and ask not what Europe can do for you, but rather ask what you can do for Europe."

The day that Bosnia and Herzegovina is able to contribute to solutions to the many challenges facing the European Union will also be the day that it will be ready for the EU membership, he concluded.

The text of the High Representative/EU Special Representative's weekly column can be accessed at www.ohr.int and www.eusrbih.org.