

Time to Move Forward

In the aftermath of last Sunday's elections Bosnia and Herzegovina is entering a new political landscape, the High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, noted today in his weekly newspaper column, which appeared in *Dnevni avaz*, *Nezavisne novine* and *Večernji list*. The HR/EUSR wrote that during his visit to Brussels, on Monday and Tuesday next week, he would endeavour "to make sure that the possibilities of this landscape are properly understood by this country's EU and NATO partners."

The HR/EUSR explained that in Brussels he would "argue that the new alignment of political forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not anti-Europe or anti-reform" and he would seek to "reassure European and NATO policymakers that they must keep the door open to Bosnia and Herzegovina."

"All the parties have expressed a commitment to carry Bosnia and Herzegovina further along the road to Euro-Atlantic integration. They must now do that for real," he wrote. "My message in Brussels will be that the new governments and the new parliaments understand the need to act constructively. But if this message is to be credible, then BiH politicians must get down to business. Clearly, some reforms have to wait for parliaments to be constituted and governments to be formed. But we cannot afford to delay any more than is absolutely necessary. Europe and NATO will not have patience – and the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina will not have patience – if newly elected politicians dither and prevaricate."

The HR/EUSR said BiH politicians must now provide concrete evidence for this positive post-election assessment by restarting, and successfully completing, the reform process that has been stalled since earlier this year.

He stressed that rapid progress is now possible in the area of

police reform, through the Police Restructuring Directorate. "The EU has made clear that it expects the Directorate to accelerate its work. So here is a reform where the politicians can demonstrate that they are serious about getting into Europe."

He also expressed optimism, based on statements made in recent days by party leaders, that progress can now be made on constitutional reform.

The HR/EUSR acknowledged that "politicians may be tempted to revert to politics as usual" but he added that "it is not unreasonable to hope that the faith that voters showed in turning out to vote last week will inspire this country's leaders to keep faith with the electorate – and move forward rather than sideways, backwards or stand still."