

Transcript of the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference



Schwarz-Schilling to Discuss Bosnia and Herzegovina with Chancellor Merkel

The High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, is meeting this week with German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, who took over the Presidency of the European Union on 1 January.

The meeting with Chancellor Merkel, which takes place on Thursday morning, is the highlight of a two-day visit to Berlin for discussions with senior German decision-makers about the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the course of this visit, Mr Schwarz-Schilling will also be meeting with Reinhard Silberberg, the State Secretary at the German Foreign Ministry, as well as other high-ranking politicians and officials.

The Berlin visit is the first of a series of visits to key capitals in advance of the next meeting of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) on 26 and 27 February at which the PIC will review its decision of to close the Office of the High Representative at the end of June this year.

Over the next four weeks, Mr Schwarz-Schilling will also be visiting Brussels, Moscow and Washington, as well as other Contact Group capitals, for discussions on the situation in

Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Following these discussions as well as talks with key stakeholders in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the High Representative and EU Special Representative will prepare an assessment, which will serve as the basis for decision at the February PIC meeting.

RTQs:

Journalist:

Following the recent opposing statements given to the media by the leader of the SDP party as well as several other individuals concerning constitutional reform and the continuation of the talks, does the Office of the High Representative have any comments on this change of view –that the constitutional reforms agreed upon in April last year should now be rejected?

OHR:

The position held by the Office of the High Representative concerning this issue has not changed, however the agreement on constitutional changes, that is the actual adoption or rejection of those changes is a matter the political leaders of <?xml:namespace prefix = st1 />Bosnia and Herzegovina must deal with. We sincerely hope that the constitutional reforms will be adopted. When and in which form? – well, that is, again, up to the political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Journalist:

There have been announcements that this time the High Representative will take a more active role in the constitutional reform negotiations. Will this happen?

OHR:

Well, it will come to this. The High Representative did say this and he will get involved, however not until, so to say, the time is right. Right now what first needs to be done is to form the governments, which should start working and then, of course, begin working on the process of constitutional reform, which in fact is an integral part of the agreement reached between the political parties: to work on coming up with a constitutional solution. Therefore, when the time comes we will talk about the role the High Representative will take in the talks on constitutional reform.