

TV Address by the High Representative/EUSR for BiH, Christian Schwarz-Schilling

EMBARGOED TILL 20.00 TODAY

Good Evening,

I am speaking to you directly this evening because we have reached a crucial point in Bosnia and Herzegovina's development.

I want to urge each and every one of you to vote in Sunday's elections.

And I want to reassure you that the international community will continue to support your country to help Bosnia and Herzegovina take its place in the heart of the European family, where it belongs.

I lived through Germany's transition from dictatorship to democracy.

As a member of the German Parliament for more than a quarter of a century, I witnessed the remarkable post-war evolution of Germany and Europe, including the transformation that followed the collapse of communism.

It is precisely because of this experience that I believe so passionately in parliamentary democracy.

I believe that democratic debate is in the long run more efficient and effective than quick-fix solutions imposed from above.

I also understand how important it is to take part in the democratic process.

Almost 2.8 million people are entitled to vote in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Yet at the last general election only 1.3 million of you actually did so.

Anyone who chooses not to vote will be allowing others to determine his or her future.

Sunday's election is especially significant because of the changing nature of the international presence.

Those who are elected on Sunday will have to take responsibility for this country's future.

It will be their task and duty to lead Bosnia and Herzegovina towards Europe.

Since becoming High Representative and EU Special Representative, I have worked alongside your elected representatives to help them fulfil this duty.

I have not acted as an alternative to them.

After the election, I will continue to work with the people that you have chosen.

And I will continue to play my role as custodian of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

We can keep building and improving on Dayton, but neither I nor the international community will allow the Peace Agreement to be violated.

As you know, the plan is for the OHR to close in June next year.

The Peace Implementation Council will review this decision in February, taking into account the situation in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and the wider region.

Rest assured. The international community will remain engaged in and committed to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I strongly believe, however, that to move this country forward, you, the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, must take your future in your own hands.

The European Union will do everything that is necessary to assist you as you make this transition.

The future of this country lies in Europe. There is no alternative.

Look carefully at the candidates and their programmes and choose those who best serve your interests and the interests of your country on its road to Europe.

I appeal to you all. Vote.

Thank you.