

Political Parties Discuss Reforms in the Council of Ministers

The Senior Deputy High Representative (SDHR), Gerhard Enver Schrömbgens, met this afternoon in Sarajevo with leaders and representatives of the parties represented in the BiH House of Representatives following October's election, to discuss reforms which will make the BiH Council of Ministers more effective.

In his post-election speech to economic administrators and international investors the High Representative, noting that the current system's shortcomings are a recipe for instability, inefficiency and muddle, called for BiH's political leaders to consider how to reform the current Council of Ministers. Changes at the heart of Government are necessary if BiH is to get rid of unnecessary bureaucracy and implement real reform. The High Representative included Council of Minister's reform as one of the six tests of seriousness for the newly elected parties. He said that how they responded to these issues would be the litmus test of their commitment to reform.

At the meeting today, the SDHR identified a number of reform areas, including ending the principle of rotation, enhancing the responsibilities of the Chair, reducing the number of deputy ministers, reconfiguring the ministries themselves and reforming the civil service structures in order to improve policy planning and give Ministers more support. The SDHR emphasised that representation of BiH's three constituent peoples should be maintained and therefore asked the parties to re-address this issue in the light of these reforms. The priority though must be efficiency and cutting unnecessary

bureaucracy. The SDHR also underlined the need for urgency – this process should be completed before the new Council of Ministers is appointed.

In conversations between the SDHR and party leaders during the last month it has become clear that there is broad-based support for reform to the Council of Ministers. SDHR Schrömbgens at the start of the meeting welcomed the fact that many party representatives have already put forward concrete proposals, emphasising that “these reforms are of such significance for BiH that ideally they should have the support of all the major parties, regardless of whether they enter government or are in opposition. As on many other issues, this represents a test of every party’s maturity and commitment to reform.”

The High Representative appointed SDHR Schrömbgens to head the working group for Council of Ministers reform in October. Since then the SDHR has held meetings with the overwhelming majority of parties that will be represented in the BiH House of Representatives to encourage them to present their ideas on these essential reforms.