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International  
Criminal Tribunal  
for the former  
Yugoslavia

Tribunal Pénal  
International pour  
l'ex-Yougoslavie

# PRESS RELEASE

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CHAMBERS

The Hague, 21 August 2006

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## VOJISLAV ŠEŠELJ ASSIGNED COUNSEL BY TRIAL CHAMBER

The Trial Chamber in the case against accused Vojislav Šešelj decided today to assign him defence counsel for the further conduct of his case. In coming to its decision, the Trial Chamber described numerous instances where Vojislav Šešelj behaved in an obstructionist, disruptive and disrespectful manner, and intimidated and made slanderous comments about witnesses. The Trial Chamber ordered that Vojislav Šešelj will participate in the proceedings against him through his defence counsel only. It will consider permitting his personal involvement on a case-by-case basis if it is in the interests of justice.

In its decision, the Trial Chamber carefully reviewed international jurisprudence on the question of an accused's right to defend himself. It cited jurisprudence that this right can be restricted in the interests of justice if the accused fails to cooperate in good faith with the court, or is willfully disruptive and disrespectful.

The Trial Chamber reviewed Vojislav Šešelj's behaviour in court during pre-trial proceedings, some of his statements and publications prior to his arrival in The Hague, and more than 191 of his submissions to the Tribunal. The Trial Chamber found that from the very beginning of the pre-trial proceedings in his case, Vojislav Šešelj has: raised irrelevant matters, used offensive and insulting language in his submissions and against court room participants and others, released confidential documents and information to unauthorized persons, and behaved in a manner that is intimidating to potential witnesses.

The Trial Chamber expressed its concern that because of his on-going disruptive behaviour and unwillingness to follow the Tribunal's rules, Vojislav Šešelj is undermining his intention to present his defence. The Trial Chamber noted that he had been warned on numerous occasions that that his behaviour was obstructionist and demonstrated a need for legal assistance.

The Tribunal's indictment charges Vojislav Šešelj with participating in recruiting, forming, financing, equipping, supporting and leading Serbian volunteer units linked to the Serbian Radical Party that participated in a number of crimes, including massacring about 255 non-Serbs at the Ovčara farm near Vukovar in 1991. The indictment also charges him with inciting Serbian volunteer units and other forces to commit violent and brutal crimes in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and with instigating his followers in the Vojvodina region of Serbia to persecute the non-Serb population. It further charges him with participating in planning and preparing the take-over of power in two Serbian autonomous regions of Croatia and seven municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the subsequent forcible removal of the non-Serb population from these areas.

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*The full text of the decision and the indictment is available on the Tribunal's website <http://www.un.org/icty>. Hard copies can be obtained from the Media Office.*

Courtroom proceedings can be followed on the Tribunal's website.

Internet address: <http://www.un.org/icty>

Media Office/Communications Service

Churchillplein 1, 2517 JW The Hague. P.O. Box 13888, 2501 EW The Hague. Netherlands

Tel.: +31-70-512-5343; 512-5356 Fax: +31-70-512-5355