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Tribunal Pénal
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l'ex-Yougoslavie

STATEMENT

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PROSECUTOR

The Hague, 25 July 2015

Statement 2016 Mostar Peace Connection Award

Mostar 23 July 2016

Serge Brammertz, Chief Prosecutor
International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia &
Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals

Prime Ministers, Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the staff of the ICTY Office of the Prosecutor, past and present, I would like to thank the Center for Peace and Multi-ethnic Cooperation in Mostar and its director, Mr. Safet Oručević, for recognizing our work with the 2016 Mostar Peace Connection award.

Tonight we are here to reaffirm our commitment to peace and reconciliation in this region. This place symbolizes that spirit.

The magnificent Old Bridge that we see, representing the multi-ethnic diversity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was intentionally destroyed in war. But it was rebuilt through the efforts of UNESCO, the City of Mostar and many others.

Today it stands again: as part of our shared cultural legacy, as a warning of the dangers in ethno-nationalism and as a reason to hope for a better future.

For more than two decades now, the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICTY has also tried to play its part in the same process of restoration.

The ICTY will soon close its doors, and its record should be assessed objectively. There is no doubt that we achieved important results, but also no doubt that we could have done more.

Justice is a universal human need. It is what the victims, from all sides, ask of us.

But it is not only the victims who need justice. To achieve sustainable peace and reconcile divided communities, accountability is essential.

These are not simply slogans. They are the hard lessons from experience. Without peace and justice, societies are condemned to be frozen in time, and locked in conflict.

The pursuit of justice should be a common ground. After the horrors the people of this region suffered, what is more natural, more hopeful, than justice? Who can disagree that those at the apex of power who set in motion plans for ethnic cleansing should be judged and punished for the misery they inflicted?

Yet we know the reality is quite different. Justice is contested. The truth is denied.

Today it seems that the region is moving in the wrong direction. Students are taught different histories in different schools here in Bosnia, to say nothing of what they are

taught in other countries. Politicians and public figures repeat nationalist slogans of the past, treat war criminals as heroes, and deny atrocities for political gain. Communities have grown further apart rather than closer together.

The next generation deserves better.

A legacy of reconciliation, not distrust.

A landscape of bridges like this one, not walls.

My Office will continue supporting you and all others who are striving to make peace and reconciliation a reality.

Again, we thank you for your long-standing support over the years, and for recognizing our work here tonight.