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International
Criminal Tribunal
for the Former
Yugoslavia

Tribunal Pénal
International pour
l'ex-Yougoslavie

ADDRESS

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The Hague, 29 November 2016

Judge Pocar's speech for the ceremony of exchange of MoUs in Sarajevo

Thank you for welcoming me to your beautiful city, to exchange the Memorandum of Understanding for the establishment of the ICTY Information Centre Sarajevo. I am especially grateful to our host, Mayor Komsic, for his support and vision throughout our joint work on this initiative. His understanding of its importance has remained constant and was a driving force in this process, which is sincerely appreciated by the Tribunal.

I am particularly happy to be with you today, as this gathering marks the realisation of an idea that began 8 years ago. In 2008, as the Tribunal's President at the time, I proposed to the United Nations General Assembly the establishment of ICTY Information and Documentation Centres in the countries of the former Yugoslavia. The need for, and feasibility of, creating such centres was subsequently confirmed in a report by the UN Secretary-General in May 2009. The Security Council then adopted Resolution 1966 in 2010, encouraging the Tribunal to cooperate with the Governments and other actors in the region, in establishing information and documentation centres that will provide public access to the Tribunal's records and archives. After much hard work and dedication, the creation of the first such Centre in Sarajevo has turned this idea into reality.

I believe now - as I believed then - that the ICTY's achievements spanning almost a quarter of a century's work will only be meaningful if they reach the public and are communicated to the citizens of the region. Information Centres are one way the Tribunal will ensure that its work remains continuously and readily accessible to the people who are most affected by it.

The Information Centres hold both a symbolic and practical importance.

On a symbolic level, it shows that the victims will not be forgotten, as the Tribunal's archives will continue to testify to their suffering long after our last witness has spoken. Victims - and victims' families - who have not stepped foot in the courtroom can connect with those who have shared similar traumas. Further, the Centre will be a confirmation that the ICTY's contribution to justice will not be overlooked once the Tribunal completes its mandate.

On a practical level, the Information Centre will provide the people of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the region a vital link to their recent past. It will allow young people, who were not yet born during the conflicts, to find out more about their families', neighbourhoods' and cities' history. For those who could not avoid the horrors of the war, the Centre will provide a space to uncover more about how and why crimes took place - and who was responsible. Better understanding of the past, for all generations, is an important part of shaping a better future.

The Information Centres are also important for the society as a whole, which unfortunately still experiences deep divisions more than twenty years after the conflict ended. The Centres will offer access to facts about the conflicts and the crimes committed, established beyond a reasonable doubt. Tens of thousands of source materials and pieces of evidence that

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support these findings will be accessible locally, with knowledgeable staff available to guide searches or answer visitors' questions.

It is only appropriate that the first ICTY Information Centre is established in this city. Sarajevo has become a poignant symbol of the destruction and cruelty of war. Its victims should have a way to see that their suffering is recognised and remembered - and that justice has been served.

Together with our partners from the City of Sarajevo, I hope that we can efficiently complete the remaining, necessary preparations to make this Centre fully operational and open to the public.

Only a society that is at peace with its past can hope to build peace in its future. It is my sincere wish that the Information Centre in Sarajevo will contribute to this process and provide one additional step of understanding on which to build a better and more peaceful future.
