



## **Press Conference by the High Representative and EU Special Representative Christian Schwarz-Schilling**

Good afternoon. Thank you for coming.

Today, I have signed and issued a Decision enacting a new Law on the Centre for the Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial and Cemetery.

The Law does the following:

- It establishes the Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial Centre, which will take over from the Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial Foundation.
- This new legal entity will operate the Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial Centre, receiving and disbursing funds for the Centre, cooperating with similar institutions around the world, and conducting related activities.
- The State of Bosnia and Herzegovina will manage the Memorial Centre through a Governing Board responsible to the Council of Ministers and appointed by the Council of Ministers.
- The Memorial Centre's operating costs will be financed from the State Budget.
- The Governing Board will appoint an Advisory Working Group to assist it in its work, and the members of the Governing Board and the Working Group will be appointed for terms of four years.
- Current employees of the Srebrenica-Potocari Foundation will automatically become employees of the Memorial Centre.

This Law has already been in parliamentary procedure and was debated by the BiH House of Representatives on 13 June. While no representative voted against the draft, the absence of Bosnian Serb deputies resulted in the lack of the majority required to pass the law.

I want to make it clear that this is not a party-political issue. However, like many other pressing matters that affect the wellbeing of the whole country, it has been negatively affected by party-political calculations, and this is unacceptable.

The Memorial Centre is one of the core elements in this country's effort to come to terms with – and to ameliorate the deep sorrow that continues to be caused by – the genocide that was committed at Srebrenica. The secure and properly managed future of this Centre matters to every decent citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina, from whichever community he or she may come.

I could not end my mandate in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the possibility that this piece of legislation would be a casualty of political manoeuvring.

This Law directly affects those who were bereaved at Srebrenica; it ensures that the dead will be remembered in an appropriate way and that the crime perpetrated against them will not be forgotten.

This in turn directly affects the capacity of the whole country to begin healing the wounds that were opened at Srebrenica.

For me to allow this Law to go into limbo because of a failure of parliamentary procedure would have been unthinkable.

The Law places the Memorial Centre on a sound and permanent footing. As you know, my Deputies and I, as well as our predecessors and other members of the international community have been actively involved in various stages of the Foundation's work. It is important that steps are taken to ensure that this work continues to be properly supported after the international community has normalised its engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Law I have enacted today provides for this.

Now I'll be happy to take your questions.