Schwarz-Schilling: A Profound and Pressing Obligation

The survivors of Srebrenica are right to demand justice, and they are right to demand that State and Entity authorities fulfil their commitments to help them improve their living conditions, the High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling wrote in his weekly newspaper column, adding that the international community will stand with them in pressing these demands.

Though nothing can begin to assuage the grief of those who continue to this day to suffer because of the genocide, this does not mean that we throw up our hands as if we were helpless, Mr Schwarz-Schilling wrote in an article that appeared today in *Dnevni avaz, Nezavisne novine* and *Večernji list*.

“The first priority must be justice for the victims,” the High Representative and EU Special Representative wrote. «Courts of law have a duty to determine whether the individuals named by the Srebrenica Working Group are or are not guilty of war crimes. This legal determination must be reached as a matter of the utmost urgency, first in regard to individuals employed by State or Entity institutions, and then in regard to the other individuals on this list.”

Recalling that Srebrenica had benefited from significant aid and investment aimed at resuscitating the economic infrastructure, Mr Schwarz-Schilling underlined that there must now be a focus on consolidating and fostering the first fruits of economic recovery.

“No one should sneer at the legitimacy or the efficacy of practical steps to restore industry, agriculture and

infrastructure in Srebrenica. This is not a plaster for a gaping wound; it is a necessary foundation for the long, slow process of recovery," he wrote.

Addressing calls for Srebrenica to be granted a special constitutional status, Mr Schwarz-Schilling stressed that this and other constitutional proposals could only be taken forward through consensus. "The principle of consensus has kept the peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the past twelve years and it is not going to be abandoned," he wrote.

Instead of exploiting the grief of survivors for their own ends, or failing to understand their special obligation in respect of Srebrenica, politicians should focus on practical steps to accelerate justice and improve the quality of life in Srebrenica and surrounding areas.

The OHR has convened a meeting of all the relevant agencies for next week to ensure that these practical steps are taken.

"By finally closing the net on perpetrators who continue to walk free and by improving conditions on the ground, the authorities will begin to fulfil a profound and pressing obligation towards the victims of genocide. We will do everything in our power to ensure that this is done," the High Representative and EU Special Representative concluded.