

Schwarz-Schilling in Srebrenica: ICJ Verdict Must be Accepted; Time for Visionary Leadership



Genocide was committed in Srebrenica and whoever rejects the verdict of the International Court of Justice is placing him or herself outside the norms of civilisation, the High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, said today in Srebrenica before calling for leadership to make this a defining moment for reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

“The ICJ verdict must be accepted in full and without reservation,” the High Representative and EU Special Representative said at the Potocari Memorial Centre where he laid a wreath to the victims of genocide. “Justice must be done. Those responsible for this crime must be held accountable and brought before the courts in The Hague and in the region.”

Mr Schwarz-Schilling pointed out, however, that 12 years on justice had not been done. “Cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia is not a choice, it is an obligation. Not fulfilling this obligation is morally reprehensible, and it carries a heavy political price,” he said.

The High Representative and EU Special Representative also explained how the ICJ verdict could serve as a basis for reconciliation. “If the crime is recognised for what it is, and if there is full cooperation with the Tribunal, a basis will have been created for reconciliation,” he said.

“Reconciliation does not simply happen. It is a long-term process.”

Mr Schwarz-Schilling drew parallels with his own experiences as a German from the generation growing up during the Second World War. “Reconciliation is possible, and it must be the goal of all political leaders of this country,” he said.

“It is my hope that the ICJ verdict will prove to be a defining moment for Bosnia and Herzegovina and for the international community as a whole,” he continued. “For the international community, the verdict has reaffirmed that the prevention of genocide is an obligation. Political leaders must never forget this.”

“For Bosnia and Herzegovina, the verdict should be viewed as an opportunity to come to terms with the past.”

The High Representative and EU Special Representative also appealed for visionary leadership. “It is at times like these that exceptional leaders and leadership can make all the difference.”

“This was the case in Western Europe half a century ago when six countries came together to create the European Community, exactly 12 years after the Second World War,” he continued. “12 years after genocide was committed in Srebrenica, it is time for leadership in Bosnia and Herzegovina.”

Mr Schwarz-Schilling also addressed other matters raised in the wake of the ICJ verdict, including a possible change of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s constitution and a special status for Srebrenica.

“Such matters are legitimate issues for political debate. “However, let me be absolutely clear,” he said. “No such changes can be imposed, and they cannot be decided unilaterally. To suggest otherwise is a dangerous illusion. Constitutional change must be based on a broad consensus and

on negotiation.”

Concerning the families of the victims of Srebrenica, the High Representative and EU Special Representative said that the international community has provided a great deal of assistance, but has to acknowledge that many returnees still face great difficulties and obstacles in their daily lives.

“It is time for responsibility. It is time for sustainable peace to be realised. And it is time for reconciliation to begin in earnest,” the High Representative and EU Special Representative concluded.

The [full text](#) of the statement by the High Representative and EU Special Representative can be found at www.ohr.int and www.eusrbih.org