

Prosecution of War Crimes To Contribute To Reconciliation

Speaking at an international conference on “Dealing with the Past in ex-Yugoslavia” in Belgrade yesterday, Senior Deputy High Representative Ambassador Bernard Fassier emphasised the absolute need to bring those indicted of war criminals before the courts. “This means increased cooperation with the ICTY, which is a core requirement for further Euro-Atlantic integration for both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro; this also means effective prosecutions of war crimes cases before the domestic courts” said Ambassador Fassier.

Reiterating that BiH has no other choice than to cooperate fully with the ICTY and to establish its own capability to prosecute and try war crimes, Ambassador Fassier said: “full cooperation with the ICTY is a key condition for membership of Partnership for Peace and for the start of negotiations with the EU on a Stability and Association Agreement; it is also a clear obligation under Dayton” adding that “the capability to prosecute war criminals in BiH’s own Courts is a key element for reconciliation”.

As BiH approaches the prosecution of war crimes cases through its own State level institutions, with the establishment of the War Crime Chamber within the Court of BiH and of the War Crime department within the BiH’s Prosecutor Office, Ambassador Fassier welcomed the adoption of some of the legislation that will make this possible. However, he stressed that failure to adopt the whole package of necessary reforms “is a failure to act in the interests of the victims and their families, who deserve to see these cases come to trial.”

While in Belgrade the Senior Deputy High Representative also

held meetings with Serbia 's Minister of Interior Dragan Jovic, Minister for Human and Minority Rights Rasim Ljaljic, and Serbia and Montenegro 's Minister of Defence Prvoslav Davinic. These meetings focused on ways in which these institutions could support and contribute to the work of the RS Srebrenica Commission. This Commission could make an important contribution to reconciliation between communities in the region.

The RS Srebrenica Commission was established in December 2003 and will submit its final Report to the RS Government on 15 October 2004, to be endorsed and send to the Commission for Human Rights within the BiH Constitutional Court by the end of October.