High Representative honors victims of Srebrenica massacre

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, today attended the ceremony to commemorate the victims of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre in Potocari. The event was attended by thousands of family members and friends of the victims, civic and political leaders from Bosnia and Herzegovina and representatives of the international community. A marker stone was unveiled on the site at Potocari designated by the High Representative to be used for a memorial and cemetery for the victims of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre. The High Representative and all his staff express their heartfelt sympathy to all of those who lost loved ones to this heinous crime.

The immeasurable suffering will go down in the history books as one of the darkest pages of human history. Beyond the figure of 7,412 missing – according to official ICRC figures – there are tens of thousands of bereaved family members who continue to feel the pain of loss because of the evil that was done in Srebrenica and who still long for justice. The Potocari memorial will ensure that this atrocity is never forgotten.

The anniversary highlights the crucial importance of justice and reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovin in Bosnia and Herzegovina's post-war recovery. The authorities in every part of the country must show the necessary political will to seek and apprehend the perpetrators of this and other outrages, so that criminals can no longer cast a shadow of mistrust and cynicism over the country by brazenly avoiding justice. The High Representative expresses his hope that the emerging memorial will be a beacon for all those, who remember this day

in two words – never again.

“It is a disgrace that six years have passed and some of the principal perpetrators of war crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina remain at large”, the High Representative said. He once again calls on the Republika Srpska authorities to effect the speedy arrest and extradition to The Hague of all indicted war criminals living in Republika Srpska, above all Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic.

The most tangible form of justice for the victims of Srebrenica would be the return of Bosniaks – the victims’ families – to their homes in the area. This year it is increasingly clear that return is no longer an illusion. It is happening. The High Representative wishes to assure all returnees, that he will do everything in his power to ensure that more and more of Srebrenica’s pre-war inhabitants are able to go back to their homes and rebuild their lives. The principle of return lies at the heart of the Dayton Peace Agreece Agreement, and is a prerequisite for the integration of a tolerant and multi-cultural Bosnia and Herzegovina in Europe.