

Remarks by Senior Deputy High Representative, Werner Wnendt at the 17th Session of the ICRC's Working Group on Persons Unaccounted for

Dear family representatives, dear Minister, representatives of the ICRC, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to have the opportunity to address you on behalf of the OHR.

First of all I would like to extend to you the greetings of the High Representative.

The OHR attaches great significance to what the Working Group on Persons Unaccounted for is trying to achieve. Although much remains to be done, this year has seen some progress, which should assist your work. First of all the actual establishment of the Missing Persons Institute, which as a BiH State Institute, should facilitate your work greatly. Furthermore, the Srebrenica Commission came forward with information on the whereabouts of missing persons in Eastern RS.

We know that the information of the Srebrenica Commission on the whereabouts of the missing may still be incomplete. However, the example of this Commission should encourage the relevant authorities to follow suit, and fully meet their obligation under the Dayton Peace Accords. Their obligation is to provide full information so that the identities, whereabouts, and fate of all missing persons can be determined.

The Srebrenica Commission also hopes that the same example

will be followed by the representatives of authorities of other groups in BiH in relation to all other war crimes and victims killed.

Truth about the fate of the missing persons is essential for the families; it is also of vital importance for BiH society as a whole. Reconciling with the recent past will otherwise be virtually impossible for all involved.

While BiH is moving closer to integration into North Atlantic and European structures, it is all the more necessary to deal with unresolved issues of the past. There is no way that the suffering of so many people can be forgotten. People have the right to know what happened to their loved ones.

That is why I hope that this Working Group will continue its successful work.

Thank you