

Remarks by the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown at the Inauguration of the War Crimes Chamber of the Court of BiH

Ladies and gentleman,

At this moment Bosnia and Herzegovina becomes the first country in the region to meet international standards to try war crimes.

Today, as we formally inaugurate the War Crimes Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, I want to stress the paramount importance of the Chamber's role to claim to full sovereign statement of BiH.

At this War Crimes Chamber

- the rights of the accused will be respected;
- 2. the proceedings will be free of bias, and conducted with diligence and fairness;
- 3. witness protection legislation and mechanisms employed by the relevant institutions, including SIPA, will provide a secure environment for those who testify;
- 4. the best European practice will be observed; and
- 5. the technical facilities of the Chamber – the best in Southeast Europe – will ensure that it operates with maximum effectiveness.

These provisions represent the fulfilment of a commitment – by the BiH authorities and by the International Community – to the people of this country to take all necessary steps in

order to ensure that the war crimes committed here in Bosnia and Herzegovina will be prosecuted here in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Basic principle justice not just say it, we can now do it.

The work of the Hague Tribunal will, of course, continue. But the Tribunal's work is necessarily finite in terms of the number of cases that will be heard. The inauguration of the War Crimes Chamber in the Court of BiH means that there will be no cut off. This Court means that we will not call a close on justice – what The Hague began, Bosnia and Herzegovina will finish.

This success is not simply a matter of geographical relocation or administrative rationalisation – it is about BiH addressing, through its own institutions, the most difficult legacy any country can face. The terrible legacy of its past. And only when that is done, can we complete the task of building the future.

This has required a substantial and sustained logistical and financial effort. In this respect I would like to thank especially the ICTY President, Judge Theodor Meron, who has played such a leading role in setting up the Chamber, providing invaluable technical knowledge and expert advice. I would also like to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of BiH Court President Medzida Kreso and BiH Chief Prosecutor Merinko Jurcevic, and my former colleague and good friend Bernard Fassier, who as SDHR coordinated the domestic and international effort to get this project off the ground and Michael Johnson with the Registry. And finally, I would like to thank the governments of the United States , Britain , Switzerland , Sweden , Norway , the Netherlands , Luxembourg , Italy , Ireland , Germany , Denmark , Austria , Japan , Hungary , Portugal and Spain , as well as the European Commission, for matching expressions of support with real, practical help. A state cannot be built on vengeance. Nor

can you build the future just on retribution. But the foundation of a stable peace is justice. Here, on this spot, today, BiH lays that foundation stone. This is a crucial day in the long journey BiH has made from a war-ravaged waste land to a BiH whole and free joining the company of sovereign nations in the European Union.

Thank you.