



UNITED NATIONS

International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals

The International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals ("Mechanism") was established on 22 December 2010 by the United Nations Security Council to continue the jurisdiction, rights, obligations and essential functions of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda ("ICTR") and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia ("ICTY") which closed in 2015 and 2017, respectively.

STATEMENT

PRESIDENT

(Exclusively for the use of the media. Not an official document)

The Hague, 11 July 2023

Judge Graciela Gatti Santana, IRMCT President Remarks for 28th Commemoration of Srebrenica Genocide Tuesday, 11 July 2023

Esteemed survivors and families of victims,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Last year my first official visit since taking up this honourable office, as President of the Mechanism, was to Potočari. I felt truly inspired by the incredible bravery, generosity, and resilience of victims and their family members to keep moving forward. In the same breath, I was overpowered by the unimaginable pain that this community has endured as a result of the most vicious plan. One *"to create an unbearable situation of total insecurity, with no hope of further survival or life for the inhabitants of Srebrenica or Žepa."*

But this plan did not prevail, because the thousands of mothers and daughters and loved ones who courageously withstood the atrocities committed here, in Srebrenica, know this: **Your dignity survives, as does that of those who are no longer with us.**

Being in this compound I am reminded of the weighty responsibilities the Mechanism has been entrusted with and reaffirm our solidarity and determination to never go back to the horrors that occurred at this very site and its surroundings. Horrors that have been unequivocally characterized by our Hague Tribunal as genocide and "among the darkest days in modern European history".

Today, I stand before you at a moment when the Mechanism has concluded the last core crimes case relating to the former Yugoslavia and 30 years since the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 827 (1993) that created the ICTY. No one can doubt that the establishment of this Tribunal marked a turning point in the landscape of international criminal justice, accountability and the rule of law.

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Currently, the Mechanism, far from closing its doors, is more than ever committed to fulfilling its crucial mandate and, as a matter of priority, consolidating its achievements and legacy, as well as those of the *ad hoc* Tribunals. As the successor body of these Tribunals, the Mechanism continues to carry out important residual functions to defend and uphold justice.

The Mechanism, like the ICTY before it, represents the universal authority of the United Nations. Its judgements, rendered against those who have grossly violated international law and human rights, have not been passed alone, but by the international community as a whole. It is therefore incumbent on all of us to ensure the Mechanism's independence, and that its work, as well as that of the *ad hoc* Tribunals, is not only respected but also protected.

In that sense, I have observed with profound regret an increase across the former Yugoslavia in the disturbing trends of genocide denial, glorification of convicted war criminals, and historical revisionism, and we have even heard shameless statements by convicted persons admitting that they "*would do it all over again.*"

Such cruelty - and audacity - in the face of suffering is indeed hard to fathom.

It is not easy to confront the forces of hatred, division and disinformation. It takes the kind of courage that the victims and survivors demonstrate every day. It is also unquestionable that reconciliation processes cannot be rushed, and that they require a certain distance from the events. It is clear that challenging the facts as established by the ICTY and the Mechanism seriously hinders this process.

This commemoration is an opportunity for critical reflection. It is high time that societies in the former Yugoslavia make room for reconciliation rather than denial. And the only way that can happen is together. I urge you to meet the challenges and responsibilities that go with it.

In closing, allow me to express my admiration for the strength shown by survivors, victims' associations and members of the broader community. I look forward later, as part of this sacred day of remembrance, to walking together across the road to pay tribute to and honour everyone who was lost 28 years ago, including those who will finally be laid to rest.

You have my heartfelt condolences.

Thank you for your attention.
