

**JUDGE CARMEL AGIUS, PRESIDENT**

**OPENING REMARKS  
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
30 YEARS LATER - SARAJEVO**

**5 APRIL 2022**

Madam Mayor, Benjamina Karić  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

Thirty years ago, today, was the start of 1,425 days of shelling, sniper attacks, and the commission of horrific crimes in Sarajevo. Three decades later, we are coming together to commemorate these tragic events, and of all places, we meet in this magnificent City Hall, which itself was a victim of the war, but has since been restored to its former glory, becoming a symbol of resurgence.

I am deeply honoured to be here and would like to thank the new Mayor of Sarajevo, Madam Benjamina Karić, and the organisers, for inviting me to take part in the opening segment of this international conference. And I am pleased to be joined by my fellow Principals of the Mechanism, the Prosecutor and the Registrar. Let me also congratulate all Muslim friends who celebrate the holy month of Ramadan. Ramadan Mubarak.

Walking through this beautiful city your attention is immediately drawn to the scourge of war – buildings marred by bullets and shrapnel; pavements and streets scarred by exploding mortar shells, and the markings on the ground in and around Markale.

All reminders not only of what took place, but of what must never, ever be permitted to happen again.

Currently, one may ask, what needs to happen, for never again to truly become a reality rather than remaining just a prayer or a mere promise.

That was the idea behind the United Nations' response to the war in the Balkans. These atrocities spurred the international community into action. The establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia by the Security Council was emblematic and hailed a new chapter in the collective fight against impunity.

More importantly, it replaced helplessness with hope.

Very often truth is the first casualty of war. But in a tribunal, in which one of its *raison d'être* is to establish the truth, all facts and evidence must be proven beyond reasonable

doubt. The ICTY not only determined the guilt or innocence of the accused, but it also looked for the facts and established a historical record.

At the Tribunal, Judges, prosecutors, defence counsel, and staff witnessed the pain, suffering and terror of the victims, survivors and their families through the adjudication of the crimes committed in Sarajevo. As a result, out of those indicted for the crimes committed during the siege, those most responsible were convicted and are currently still serving very lengthy sentences: Stanislav Galić, Dragomir Milošević, Radovan Karadžić, and Ratko Mladić.

Still, there are those who continue to deny what happened, who spread misinformation, who attempt to rewrite history, and who in so doing attempt to destabilise the region. Some have gone so far as to say that it is the Mechanism who is responsible for destabilising the region. In the face of this revisionism, we must stand strong.

And I find it particularly unfortunate that revisionism is being espoused by political leaders – the very persons who should be acting to unite Bosnia and Herzegovina, and looking for ways to provide its citizens with improved education, employment prospects, and better standards of health care.

It is therefore very pertinent that this building now houses the ICTY Information Centre whose work can serve to counter these revisionist narratives. Here you will find a wealth of information and the jurisprudence of the Tribunal. And in this context of outreach, the Mechanism is also very proud of its Information Programme for Affected Communities, an initiative which is generously funded by the European Union. I was privileged, through this Programme, to meet a number of truly inspiring young people from the region when they came to the Mechanism, and I was encouraged by their thirst for knowledge and their passion for a better future. A future where all ethnicities can live in peace.

Madam Mayor, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am fully aware that I am surrounded today by like-minded, good-willing individuals, who want a better future for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Individuals who want to move forward having learnt from the lessons of the past, and are passionate about their country and everything it has to offer. For this to happen, I believe that each and every one of us needs to hold ourselves accountable in reaching out to the youth, who are the most powerful people in society. Your country needs them.

I too am passionate about a better future for Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is the youth who must ensure that that happens. To the youth I say: Be present, don't lose hope, and shape your path.

I thank you very much.