



*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)*

**Judge Graciela Gatti Santana**

**President, International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals**

**Remarks for Conference "Srebrenica 1995-2025: Dealing with the Past"**

**8 July 2025, Sarajevo**

Excellencies,

Esteemed survivors,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am deeply honoured to address you at the opening of this significant event marking the 30th commemoration of the Srebrenica Genocide, and would like to express my sincere gratitude to the organisers for their invitation.

The topics to be discussed today – including the prosecution of war crimes, the role of education in youth, and the future of civil society – reflect some of the elements that are essential for restoring and consolidating peace after a conflict. They also show the complexity of this endeavour, which requires concerted efforts on several fronts.

The unthinkable events that occurred in Srebrenica 30 years ago were found to constitute acts of genocide, not only by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (Mechanism), but also by the International Court of Justice, the world's highest court. These conclusions were reached after painstaking analysis of large amounts of evidence in the context of independent and impartial court proceedings. As such, they should be considered indisputable.

Yet, most regrettably, they are not. While progress has been achieved, ethnic divisions are still perpetuated today; divisions that exist due to inflammatory rhetoric denying that crimes occurred, glorifying those convicted for them, and attempting to re-write history. I consider that the growth in these phenomena is related to the deliberate spreading of false information, as well as a lack of awareness concerning the work of the Tribunals and the conflicts of the 1990s. This is where educating the public, particularly the younger generations, about the judicially established facts can have a major impact, and acts of remembrance can become a powerful, even radical, tool.

In its resolution designating 11 July as the International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica, the United Nations General Assembly recognized the link between the judicial findings, on the one hand, and remembrance and education, on the other. The resolution specifically welcomed the important progress made in terms of ensuring criminal accountability for



genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. It also urged United Nations Member States, international organisations, and civil society to engage in education and memorialisation, “towards preventing denial and distortion, and occurrence of genocides in the future”.

Determining the individual criminal responsibility of accused persons was indeed the core judicial mandate of the Mechanism and its predecessors, the ICTY and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). With respect to Srebrenica, the ICTY and the Mechanism together convicted a total of 18 people for the crimes committed; seven of them for genocide. Today, despite challenges, national jurisdictions continue to pursue accountability for these and other crimes. The Mechanism supports them by, for example, providing access, where certain conditions are met, to witnesses and evidence for which judicially ordered protection was previously granted.

Nevertheless, justice is only one link in the process. In order to restore and maintain peace and work towards reconciliation, it is crucial that the affected communities learn and accept the truth of what happened. This includes being willing to understand the complexities of the conflicts, to acknowledge the human stories behind the statistics, and to become informed about the ways in which justice and accountability mechanisms can help prevent such atrocities from happening again.

In discharging their mandates, the ICTY and the Mechanism have created a rich legacy, not only in terms of advancing the law, but also by establishing the facts surrounding the conflicts in the 1990s. Today, the Mechanism remains committed to making this legacy accessible to anyone interested in the history of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia.

The Mechanism’s Information Programme for Affected Communities – our dedicated outreach programme, which is funded by the European Union – has in the past years conducted dozens of activities aimed at raising awareness about the factual findings made by the ICTY and the Mechanism. Several initiatives have targeted young people in the region of the former Yugoslavia, hoping to foster a deeper and more nuanced appreciation of the region’s recent history and its lasting consequences. Teaching the history of the 1990s conflicts is not an easy task, as the divisions that led to the conflicts have not fully healed. However, incorporating judicial materials into teaching can help engage students in critical thinking, empathy, and the quest for truth, and the results are far-reaching.

The Mechanism also seeks to engage the public through exhibitions – whether online, or at the Information Centre on the ICTY generously hosted by the City of Sarajevo in this very building. Moreover, through its online databases, the Mechanism provides access to its public archives and those of the ICTY and the ICTR, which include witness testimonies, court records, documentary evidence, and a wealth of other materials.

It is very difficult for any country or region to move forward after a conflict when there are different versions of what happened; when the truth, even if judicially established, is actively undermined. I strongly believe that education is critical to counter such false narratives. Furthermore, it is an essential pillar for a strong foundation of societies that are resilient, inclusive, and compassionate. By harnessing the power of education, we can ensure that the lessons from the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, including what happened in Srebrenica three decades ago, are not forgotten, and encourage the next generations to create a more just future. My hope is that they will choose to stand firmly against violence and discrimination on the basis of ethnic, national, religious, or other differences. Likewise, the anniversary of the Srebrenica Genocide offers an opportunity to take stock of the significance of memorialisation, and to place serious focus on how remembrance can serve reconciliation.



The scars left behind by conflict are deep. They transcend borders, outlast the perpetrators and the victims, and affect even those who were not yet born at the time. As a consequence, they require patience, a multi-disciplinary approach, and an openness to face painful realities. For these reasons, today's discussions are all the more relevant and I am looking forward to hearing the exchanges that will follow on these challenging, yet very important, issues.

Thank you very much.

\*\*\*\*