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Press release

„Speech by Adis Ahmetović, MP, on the debate "30 years of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia - coming to terms with the past remains a task"“

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Speech by Adis Ahmetović, MP, on the debate "30 years of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia - coming to terms with the past remains a task":

- The spoken word applies -

Dear Madam President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

From 1999 to 2007, Carla Del Ponte was Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). At the opening of the trial of Slobodan Milošević on February 12, 2002, she said in her opening statement, and I quote:

"This Tribunal, and this trial in particular, are the most forceful proof that no one is above the law or beyond the reach of international justice."

Exactly 30 years ago today, the ICTY was established based on UN Security Council Resolution 827 to indict and prosecute those most responsible for the grave crimes committed on the territory of the former Yugoslavia beginning in 1991. The atrocities were based on ethno-fascist ideology, the dream of "ethnically pure" territories and the ruthless enlargement of state borders.

Slobodan Milošević and his power apparatus wanted to realize their great power fantasies through ethnic cleansing, including in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. And thus created an unthinkable, new form of inhuman politics in Europe after the end of the Second World War.

- over 150,000 dead,
- nearly four million people driven from their homes,
- millions of traumatized people.



These wars were waged brutally and cruelly against the civilian population, on a scale that is hard to imagine:

- The systematic rapes of women as weapons of war,
- the numerous massacres of innocent civilians, including many women and children,
- the internment camps where systematic torture and murder took place,
- the almost four-year siege of Sarajevo, during which sniper attacks and bombardments of innocent civilians were part of everyday life, and last but not least
- the genocide of Srebrenica, in which over 8,300 people were murdered in shifts within a few days in the presence of UN blue helmet soldiers.

All of these are just a few of the terrible memories that we associate with these wars.

Therefore, the work of the ICTY has been an important milestone in addressing these crimes:

1. the ICTY has ensured that the most serious crimes do not go unpunished.
2. it has created a reliable source of information through years of elaborate legal, objective processing of the events, from which it can be seen what really happened at that time.
3. has given the victims and their relatives a space in which they could report on the injustice inflicted on them before the eyes of the world public.
4. in conclusion, it has led to the effective application and strengthening of international law.

Victims of war crimes and their relatives are not seeking revenge, but justice. They are seeking recognition of the injustice inflicted on them and thousands of other women and men, families and children, and the clear naming and punishment of the perpetrators.



The ICTY was able to make a fundamental contribution to this. But the big problem we still face:

Ethno-nationalist ideologies in the Western Balkans region persist to this day. It is our historical legacy and our European responsibility to resolutely push back these ideologies. We cannot ignore the fact that even today, 30 years after the establishment of the ICTY, convicted war criminals and their deeds are glorified.

"Coming to terms with the past remains the task" - that is the title of today's debate. I can only agree with it.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There will come a day when the war in Ukraine will be over. Let us stand up for a complete legal reappraisal to be followed by a social reappraisal. And that international law triumphs over injustice in this case as well.

Let us work on this - together and responsibly.

Thank you very much for today's debate and thank you for your attention.