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The Head of Mission

Ambassador Hans Ola Urstad, Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia

Meeting of war crimes prosecutors from Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia in Belgrade on the second anniversary of the signing of the 2005 Serbian-Croatian Prosecutors' Co-operation Agreement

Belgrade, 5 February 2007

- Honorable Prosecutors, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,
- Let me first of all express my recognition for the excellent results achieved so far in this sector, and particularly in relation to the two year anniversary of the cooperation agreement.
- Prosecutorial agreements like this have opened up for a new level of cross-border cooperation in a very challenging area. I personally see this as outstanding achievements, not least in light of the sensitivity of the subject matter between the different countries involved.
- Only a few years ago, it would have been hard to imagine that cooperation in the field of war crimes would stand out as an example of how the countries of the former Yugoslavia could work together for a better future.
- However, everyone here knows that there are still some issues left which need to be solved, in order to close the so-called "impunity gap". I hope this meeting may contribute to that, to extradition of nationals to the state where the crime was committed, to transfer of an already initiated case to the state holding the accused and to sharing of evidence with the country best suited to prosecute - to mention some of the issues still to be worked on and solved.
- Certainly, this is not a responsibility limited to legal practitioners, like yourselves, but the clear responsibility of the leading political circles, governments and parliaments, who have to adopt the proper legislative framework, negotiate inter-state agreements and politically endorse efficient investigation, prosecution and trials of war crime perpetrators.

- From the OSCE's side, we are ready and wish to continue to assist in your cross-border cooperation and seek further improvements.
- Efforts to deal with the past is to a considerable extent common for all the countries involved, which I believe the documentary film we will show soon will prove. Let me therefore in advance thank all of those who made this documentary, and also the journalists who took part in the study visit and brought their impressions from BiH to Serbia.
- More than in any other sector, accurate information to the public is of essence here - you journalists, therefore, play a very important role towards the public in providing objective and accurate information to them.
- Let me also take the opportunity to express my gratitude to the government of the Netherlands for its generous financial contribution over the last two years.
- This has made it possible for us to support the "Palic process", the study visits for journalists, producing the documentary, as well as holding this timely conference.

Thank you very much.