

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF MISSION

**Welcoming Statement by Amb. Maurizio Massari,
Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia and Montenegro
At the
Tenth Igman Initiative Regional Conference**

**Belgrade
27 June 2005**

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

This is the second occasion where I have the pleasure to address a conference of the Heads of States of Serbia and Montenegro, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, organized by the Igman Initiative. This prominent non-governmental forum has been doing groundbreaking work in promoting dialogue and reconciliation in the region of South East Europe, and in particular among the three states represented here.

Today's meeting is significant because it takes place ten years after the end of wars that engulfed the region and two weeks before the anniversary of the massacre in Srebrenica during which 8,000 Bosniaks were killed. We welcome the statements of the SaM Council of Ministers and of responsible politicians in Serbia and Montenegro in condemning this worst of war crimes in Europe since the Second World War. We also welcome the decision of the highest state authorities of Serbia and SaM to go to Srebrenica, as well as the statement of condemnation of war crimes, including Srebrenica, by the Serbian Prime Minister and highest authorities of Republika Srpska. We regret, however, the Serbian Parliament failure to agree on moral condemnation of war crimes, including Srebrenica.

General condemnation of war crimes is absolutely necessary, but not sufficient. It must be accompanied by concrete steps to apprehend and bring to justice the remaining war criminals indicted by the ICTY - especially the two individuals still at large and most directly responsible for the Srebrenica genocide. We are hopeful that they will soon have their day in court. The growing co-operation between the ICTY and Serbia and Montenegro in recent months, which we have fully recognized and commended, should be crowned with resolute action to close the ICTY chapter. This will remove the final barrier for integrating the country to the community of European states who gives supremacy to the rule of law.

At the same time, it should be understood that the issue of war crimes will not and should not go away. The task remains for all the three countries to bring to domestic prosecution all those who committed war crimes in the recent conflicts. The OSCE Mission has helped build such domestic capacity and promote regional co-operation, most recently in regional events in Palic and Brioni. It will continue to do so. The three Missions have also been asked by the ICTY to monitor domestic war crimes trials to assess their compatibility with international standards.

Cultural diversity and multi-ethnicity has characterized Europe, in particular Central and South Eastern Europe, for centuries. Such diversity is also the future of the continent. Europe paid dearly for the attempts to destroy this diversity in the first half of the last century and such attempts must not be repeated in any form.

Multi-ethnicity is not only enrichment to society, but also an element of stability. The multi-ethnic character of the states in the region should be preserved and protected, including by full observance of the rights of national minorities in line with the highest international standards.

Another key element is providing a realistic possibility to all the refugees and internally displaced persons in the region to return to their homes or offer them a just compensation. While the work on these issues is far from completed, it is encouraging that the three states are aware of this and that they have subscribed to the Sarajevo Declaration, which needs to be implemented now. We expect that the three governments show equally the maximum political will to close successfully the chapter of refugee returns.

The increased co-operation among the three states and their non-governmental sectors has benefited from the visa-free regime and this should be maintained. Cultural and educational co-operation, especially among the young people, should face no obstacles of any kind.

While issues of the past may still appear controversial, there should be no controversy about sharing a common future of the three states, which is a European future in the EU family.

I would like to close by re-affirming that the OSCE Mission to Serbia and Montenegro will continue to assist its host country in strengthening its democratic institutions and processes, promoting regional co-operation and help their integration into the EU and the Euro-Atlantic institutions. Among the international organizations active in the region, the OSCE has established itself as recognized payer with a specific role. The OSCE will promote through various projects, such as this one of the Igman Initiative, the values of democracy, tolerance and rule of law which must never be questioned again anywhere in Europe.

Thank you.