



THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

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Report of the International Tribunal
for the prosecution of persons responsible
for serious violation of international
humanitarian law committed in
the territory of the former Yugoslavia

Check against delivery

STATEMENT
by
His Excellency Pavle Jevremovic,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary,
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Serbia to the United Nations

New York, 13 October 2008

Mr. President,

Before I proceed, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the President of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, Fausto Pocar, for presenting the Fifteenth annual report of the Tribunal to the General Assembly.

Mr. President,

The Republic of Serbia is fully committed to honouring its international obligations and continued to provide, in the reporting period, adequate responses in several areas of cooperation. In May 2008, the Government adopted a framework for future cooperation with the ICTY whereupon, and in compliance with its provisions, the two of the most wanted remaining fugitives, Stojan Zupljanin and Radovan Karadzic, were arrested by Serbian authorities and transferred to the detention unit of the Tribunal in June and July 2008. The National Security Council of Serbia, the Action Team in charge of tracking fugitives, and the Office of the War Crimes Prosecutor had a central role in the arrests, as stated in the Report.

Furthermore, Serbia demonstrated in the reporting period all over again its capacity to take action in critical moments. It cooperated also by granting waivers to all persons requested by the Tribunal and provided thousands of documents from the Archives, including classified ones, relative to the ongoing cases. Meanwhile, exchange of visits of top officials between Belgrade and The Hague has become a regular practice, too. It is also important to point out that persons who took part in sheltering the fugitives have been identified and prosecuted by the Serbian authorities. These, Mr. President, are considerable achievements, made with a lot of hard work and dedication.

Mr. President,

The new Government of Serbia is fully determined to uphold its commitment to bring to justice all indicted individuals by transferring them to the Tribunal and trying them in domestic courts. In that context, my country also recognizes the efforts of the new Prosecutor, Mr. Serge Brammertz, appointed in January 2008, in securing the arrests of the remaining fugitives in close cooperation with Serbian authorities. The Action Team of Serbia continues to fully conduct the operations to track down the fugitives which gives us every reason to believe that Ratko Mladic and Goran Hadzic, the two remaining indictees, cannot continue to hide forever and that they will be apprehended and transferred to the Tribunal soon.

Successful completion of cooperation with the ICTY, Mr. President, is one of the most important objectives of the new Serbian Government; after all, it is in the interest of the people of Serbia to terminate the cooperation swiftly and effectively.

Serbia supports the Completion Strategy of the ICTY, defined in United Nations Security Council resolutions 1503 and 1534. The basic precondition for the success of the strategy is, we believe, the capacity of the domestic courts to process the cases they have been transferred by the ICTY according to the international legal standards. It is only through joint cooperation that we shall be able to carry through the Completion Strategy by the year 2010. In this regard, I would like to point out that the issues of Residual Mechanisms are very important and complex and call for a broad expert discussion within the relevant bodies of the General Assembly.

However, Mr. President, some problems and challenges continue to remain. To overcome them and satisfy justice and uphold the rule of law, the issue of witness protection is of crucial importance. Serbia has done its best to protect witnesses and acted upon each of the requests of the Office of the Tribunal Prosecutor. Accordingly, the Serbian War Crimes Prosecutor has facilitated the witnesses to testify and, on several occasions, protected those who had received threats. The Report concludes that the interference with witnesses, particularly in the form of witness intimidation and their growing failure to appear voluntarily to testify remains a grave concern. My country is also seriously concerned by the inability, even flat refusal, by some countries and organizations to provide witness protection and prevent the disappearance of potential witnesses. We therefore call for international cooperation to redress the situation even at this late stage.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like to express my hope that cooperation between my country and the Tribunal will continue and complete successfully to the benefit of overall regional reconciliation.

Thank you, Mr. President.