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The Balkans: 10 years after Srebrenica

European Parliament resolution on Srebrenica

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Bosnia-Herzegovina and the western Balkans, in particular that on the state of regional integration in the western Balkans adopted on 14 April 2005¹,
 - having regard to the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) for the countries of the western Balkans initiated by the EU in 1999 in an effort to promote democratisation, justice, reconciliation and peace in the region,
 - having regard to the declaration of the EU-Western Balkans Summit in Thessaloniki of 21 June 2003 highlighting the European perspective of the western Balkan countries, which will become an integral part of the EU once they meet the established criteria,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the last European Council held in Brussels on 16 and 17 June 2005 reaffirming its commitment to full implementation of the Thessaloniki agenda,
 - having regard to UN Security Council Resolutions 827 of 25 May 1993, 1244 of 10 June 1999, 1551 of 9 July 2004 and 1575 of 22 November 2004,
 - having regard to the report by the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), Carla del Ponte, to the UN Security Council on 13 June 2005,
 - having regard to Rule 103(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas, on 11 July 1995, the eastern Bosnian town of Srebrenica, which was proclaimed a safe area by the UN Security Council resolution of 16 April 1993, fell to the Bosnian Serb forces led by General Ratko Mladic and under the direction of the then president of the Republika Srpska, Radovan Karadzic,
- B. whereas, during several days of carnage after the fall of Srebrenica, more than 8 000 Muslim men and boys, who had sought safety in this area under the protection of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), were summarily executed by Bosnian Serb forces commanded by General Mladic and by paramilitary units, including Serbian irregular police units which had entered Bosnian territory from Serbia,

¹ *Texts Adopted*, P6_TA(2005)0131.

- C. whereas this tragedy, declared an act of genocide by the ICTY, took place in a UN-proclaimed safe haven, and therefore stands as a symbol of the impotence of the international community to intervene in the conflict and protect the innocent,
 - D. having regard to the multiple violations of the Geneva Convention perpetrated by Bosnian Serb troops against Srebrenica's Muslim civilians, including deportations of thousands of women, children and elderly and the rape of a large number of women,
 - E. whereas in spite of the enormous efforts made to date to discover and exhume mass and individual graves and identify the bodies of the victims, the searches conducted until now do not offer a complete reconstruction of the events in and around Srebrenica,
 - F. whereas there cannot be real peace without justice, and full and unrestricted cooperation with the ICTY remains a basic requirement for further continuation of the process of integration into the EU for the countries of the Western Balkans,
 - G. whereas General Radislav Krstic of the Bosnian Serb army is the first person found guilty by the ICTY of aiding and abetting the Srebrenica genocide, but the two most prominently indicted persons, Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic, are still at large ten years after the tragic events,
 - H. whereas the shortfalls in the EU decision-making mechanisms and the lack of a genuine common foreign and security policy also played a negative role in the determination of the events,
 - I. whereas the EU budgetary allocations for relations with the western Balkans have been constantly and significantly reduced every year since 2002; whereas the region must be allocated adequate funding to take into account the gradual shift from physical reconstruction to institution-building and pre-accession assistance, as well as its strategic importance to the EU,
 - J. whereas Bosnia-Herzegovina has moved its negotiating table from Dayton to Brussels, and the project of an EU future enjoys great popular support in the country,
1. Condemns in the strongest possible terms the Srebrenica massacre; commemorates and honours the victims of the atrocities; expresses its condolences to and solidarity with the families of the victims, many of whom are living without final confirmation of the fate of their fathers, sons, husbands or brothers; recognises that this continuing pain is aggravated by the failure to bring those responsible for these acts to justice;
 2. Calls on the Council and Commission to pay adequate remembrance to the tenth anniversary of the Srebrenica-Potocari act of genocide, stressing that this unbearable shame in Europe should be considered forever the last massacre carried out in the name of ethnic ideology; states that it will do everything in its power to prevent such acts of monstrous barbarism from happening in Europe ever again;
 3. Expresses its deepest concern that Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic are still at large in the region, and calls on the Republika Srpska and on Serbia-Montenegro to take urgent action in order to locate Karadzic and Mladic and bring them to justice; considers the

apparent popular support enjoyed by Karadzic and Mladic in some parts of the region to be an insult to the memory of the victims and a major obstacle to reconciliation;

4. Expresses its wholehearted support for the valuable and difficult work of the ICTY, and reiterates that full cooperation with the Tribunal is a precondition for closer cooperation with the EU; emphasises that all countries in the region should meet their obligations to cooperate fully with the ICTY at all times; regards the capture, transfer and condemnation of those guilty of war crimes as a minimum act of recognition for the thousands of war crimes victims in Srebrenica and elsewhere;
5. Stresses the importance of securing peace and stability in the western Balkans and the role that full implementation of the Thessaloniki agenda plays in achieving the objectives of the stabilisation and association process; emphasises that full and unrestricted cooperation with the ICTY remains an essential requirement for further continuation of the process of integration with the EU;
6. Recalls that the UN peacekeeping mandate and force failed to protect the assigned safe areas; calls on the UN and the relevant international institutions to put into practice the lessons learned from this failure and to be truly prepared for future peacekeeping missions;
7. Is deeply disturbed and shocked by the video footage recently released at The Hague tribunal and aired on channels across the world, depicting the cold-blooded execution of six prisoners in civilian clothing and presenting irrefutable evidence of what actually took place; stresses the fact that this footage clearly shows the notorious 'Scorpions Unit', a Serb paramilitary group associated with the national army and police, cravenly murdering civilians near Srebrenica;
8. Welcomes the reaction of Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica to the release of the video footage, resulting in the arrest of the former members of the 'Scorpions Unit' identified in the video; supports the decision of the Serbian President, Boris Tadic, and the President of Serbia-Montenegro, Svetozar Marovic, to pay respect at the Potocari memorial on the tenth anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre;
9. Regrets deeply that the Serbian Parliament failed to adopt a draft resolution recognising and formally condemning the Srebrenica massacre and giving a sign of willingness to cope with the past and contribute to reconciliation and the peaceful resolution of the problems of the region;
10. Expresses its sincere preoccupation in regard to the still considerable part of Serbian public opinion which does not recognise war crimes against Muslim civilians; strongly encourages the Serbian Government to take action to confront the nation with its past and curb the hero-worship of indicted war criminals; recognises the airing of the recent Srebrenica video footage on the evening news by Serbian television channels to be a first step in this direction, but emphasises that much more needs to be done to trump the historical distortions that are held as truth by the population;
11. Supports the call made by Lord Ashdown, the High Representative for Bosnia-Herzegovina, on the Bosnian Serb ministers to specify the number of troops and identify all individuals from outside Bosnia involved in the video footage;

12. Praises the work and the commitment of all those who during these years have never stopped searching for the truth, and calls on the Council, the Commission and the Member States to provide them with the necessary means to continue their work, inter alia, by helping speed up the very costly process of identifying the victims;
13. Regrets the fact that the conditions for the return of refugees and internally displaced people to the region have still to be fully met;
14. Stresses that the European integration perspective offered to all the countries of the Balkans and the Stabilisation and Association Process should form the catalyst for a domestic drive for reforms and democratic consolidation and should assist all countries in the region in developing a common understanding of their tragic past and creating a basis for a better future; emphasises that this future depends to a very large extent on the countries of the region themselves;
15. Reaffirms the commitment of the European Union to assisting the applicant and potential applicant countries of the Balkans in their preparation for membership, and calls for adequate instruments and funding in this regard during the next financial perspective that match the ambitions of the Union and the legitimate expectations of the countries of the region;
16. Notes that the Dayton agreement has been an important instrument for bringing peace to the region but is aware that Dayton is no longer an appropriate framework also with respect to future integration with the EU; urges the Council and all parties concerned, therefore, to support initiatives aimed at adapting the agreement by consensus; stresses that the citizens of all the country's entities and ethnicities must assume their responsibility in order to reach a new constitutional settlement and create a viable state for all;
17. Expresses its serious concern at the economic and social situation; stresses that the solution to this crucial issue is the key to stable development in the region; calls on the governments and the EU to recognise that economic and social development is the top priority for the peoples of the region and to act accordingly; underlines the importance of enhancing regional and crossborder cooperation and reconciliation between the peoples of the western Balkan countries as well as with their neighbours;
18. Stresses the importance of policies of reconciliation, and emphasises the important role of the religious authorities, the media and the educational systems in this difficult process, so that civilians of all ethnicities may overcome the tensions of the past and begin a peaceful and sincere coexistence fit for enduring stability and economic growth; in this respect asks for consideration to be given to establishing a truth and reconciliation commission in Bosnia-Herzegovina;
19. Stresses that the lessons learned from Srebrenica and the wars in former Yugoslavia must serve as the basis for a strengthening of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy;
20. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission, the governments of the Member States, the Government and Parliament of Bosnia-

Herzegovina and its entities, and the governments and parliaments of the countries of the western Balkans.