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## **Third Regional Forum on mechanisms of truth-seeking and truth-telling about war crimes in the former Yugoslavia**

11 February 2008, Belgrade

### **II Workshop: Regional Approach to Truth-seeking About War Crimes**

#### **Conclusions**

War crimes trials represent the most important instrument for establishing individual criminal responsibility for war crimes. However, they have some serious limitations (courts' capacities, time needed for investigations and trials, witnesses dying or fearing to testify), which could be complemented by other mechanisms, such as a regional truth-seeking and truth-telling body.

*... establishing a regional body that would create an environment favourable for reconciliation, an environment in which it would be possible to find more evidence, more witnesses, which would certainly improve the ongoing trials. If that does not happen, trials will be slowed down and very few criminals will be convicted, even though they are the highest ranking commanders and officers holding civilian and political positions (Ibro Bulić, Prosecutor, BiH).*

Regional consultations should result in the creation of a broad and strong civil society coalition that would be able to approach the national governments and international institutions with recommendations on the societal need for establishing a regional body for truth-seeking and truth-telling about war crimes.

A regional body for truth-seeking and truth-telling about war crimes should not represent a substitute for courts, but rather an instrument for a more efficient collection of new facts that could be used in court, police and prosecution bodies.

It is necessary to create a positive political and social environment in the region for establishing and publicly disclosing the truth about war crimes. It takes political will and a participative process, which would involve the media, artists, youth, victims, war veterans, human rights organizations, and other social groups.

A commission for victims should meet the needs and characteristics of local circumstances in the post-Yugoslav countries. Experiences of other post-conflict or post-totalitarian societies could be of great help, but they cannot be directly implemented in the case of the former Yugoslavia.

This regional body should organize public hearings of victims and it should also find a way to involve perpetrators in this process: *for me, a man who has lost many family members and friends, public hearing of those who killed my dearest would be of great significance. I want to simply look them in the eyes and ask: Why? I support the regional approach and a regional body for one reason only. The events that happened on the territory of the former Yugoslavia were all mixed up for we have so many people who came ... many people came to Bosnia or Srebrenica from other places and committed crimes. They are now geographically separated and it is hard to find information about what they did and where they did those things. So, the regional approach is very important for the sake of truth and reconciliation.* (Amir Kulagić, a victim and war veteran from Srebrenica).

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