



**Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide - Keynote remarks for Srebrenica
Heroines International Conference, July 10, 2022, 10am,
Srebrenica Memorial Center**

Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me today. Thank you, especially to the Mothers of Srebrenica. I would like to start by paying my respects to the more than 8000 fathers, sons, nephews, uncles, grandfathers, and brothers who were murdered during the genocide here.

In June 2021, as soon as the COVID restrictions were lifted, I conducted my first two official visits as Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide to two countries of great significance to my mandate, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Rwanda. The mandate of my office was created because we, as the International Community and Member States of the world failed to prevent and respond to the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, 1994 and the Srebrenica Genocide in 1995. The specifics of my mandate are strongly connected to the lessons learned from both failures.

Last year, I came here to Srebrenica, to pay respect to the victims and survivors of the Genocide and I was then privileged to meet the Mothers of Srebrenica. I also came here due to growing concerns around persistent patterns of denial of the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, as well as the glorification of war criminals, hate speech, and rhetoric of division. My visit was also aimed at contributing at advancing national reconciliation and trust-building efforts across the country, including by supporting initiatives at the local and community level.

The Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, has often acknowledged that "the past is a vital step towards rebuilding trust, and that reconciliation means rejecting denial of genocide and war crimes and of any effort to glorify convicted war criminals. It also means recognizing the suffering of all victims and survivors."

More than 75 years after the Holocaust and more than 25 years after the genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the persistence of speech denying or distorting the historical facts of these events or glorifying their perpetrators is a source of serious concern that the UN system is confronting.

On July 15, 2022, next week, My Office will launch a new policy paper. A first of its kind for the United Nations, the Policy Paper entitled, *Combating Holocaust and Genocide Denial: Protecting Survivors, Preserving Memory, and Promoting Prevention* that addresses these pernicious trends and provides guidance for governments, the United Nations system, and other relevant actors, including social media companies, to address the phenomena of Holocaust denial and distortion and genocide denial.

The policy paper is produced in collaboration with and informed by an expert brainstorming meeting convened with the [Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights](#).

History teaches us that Genocide denial and glorification of war criminals divides people, communities, and states; it feeds on and strengthens contested narratives about the past, the present and the future. It also undermines judicial decisions and

When I met the Mothers of Srebrenica here in Potocari, the President of the Mother's Action of the Srebrenica and Zepa Enclaves, Mrs Munira Subasic, gave me a bunch of pink roses, grown in her garden. The Mothers invited me to come back on July 11th, 2022, for the commemoration.

They also gave me the flower of Srebrenica, which I have carried every day ever since, to remind me that the eleven petals, every stitch made by hand, represents 11th of July, the day we shall commemorate tomorrow, when a Genocide happened here. I also saw, here, the graveyards of toddlers, children killed in the Genocide before they could speak or walk, and I know that the white in my flower of Srebrenica represents their innocence.

Ladies and Gentlemen, The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia determined conclusively that a Genocide was committed here in Srebrenica.

We do know that all societies may have indicators of risk. The Mothers of Srebrenica told me how they have focused on raising children who were not involved in reprisals, retaliation, or revenge. In doing so they have sought to break the cycle and shown that it's how societies respond to these risks that determines if a situation escalates, including in the most serious instances, the commission of atrocity crimes, by which I mean genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. The green in my flower of Srebrenica, represents the hope for the future these generations raised by the Mothers of Srebrenica hold.

This is extremely important. We see, even today, provocative incidents, messages and symbols used to inflame

In November 2020, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Dayton Peace Accords,
the three members of the Presidency

judgements exist not only as judicial precedents but as living documents of examples of judicial justice.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today's conference is an important opportunity to honor the victims and survivors of the Srebrenica genocide. Thousands of people are still missing. Tomorrow, we shall bury the remains of 50 loved ones found over the last year. The

The kanga has a very significant and symbolic role. Each kanga carries an