



United States Mission to the OSCE

20th Anniversary of Genocide in Srebrenica

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
the Permanent Council, Vienna
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July 11th marked the 20th anniversary of genocide in Srebrenica. On that tragic day, 20 years ago, General Ratko Mladic challenged UN peacekeepers at a designated safe area for civilians. And, when he found that the will of the international community was weak, he pressed his forces forward. Bosnians who had gathered in Srebrenica with the expectation of protection, found themselves alone. Eight thousand Muslim men and boys were slaughtered in the ensuing, horrific days, their bodies dumped in mass graves.

The discovery of that unconscionable crime, a crime against humanity, shocked the conscience of the world.

This anniversary is a powerful reminder of the need to confront evil in all its forms, and to stand up for human rights and human dignity. As OSCE participating States, we have embraced a concept of comprehensive security, recognizing that the protection of human rights and human dignity is inseparable from the preservation of peace and security. And, in order to give life to that concept, we have solemnly pledged to uphold principles and commitments to one another and to the people of the OSCE region.

That is why it was profoundly disappointing to see one of our fellow participating States block the UN Security Council Resolution marking the 20th anniversary of genocide in Srebrenica.

As an aside here, I would urge my colleagues to read the moving statement by my colleague Ambassador Samantha Power in the Security Council after the veto, including her personal reflections on her time as a young journalist in the Balkans at the time of Srebrenica.

We must not deny what happened there, nor must we forget what President Obama described as a “stain on our collective conscience.” For this reason we honor the victims, draw inspiration from the courage of their family members, and rededicate ourselves to preventing such atrocities from ever happening again.

Serbian Prime Minister Vucic’s attendance at the July 11 memorial in Srebrenica was an important symbolic step in the process of reconciliation, and we join with the Tripartite Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina in condemning the stone-throwing attack on Mr. Vucic that day.

As we join Bosnia and Herzegovina in remembering the victims of the Srebrenica genocide, we also recognize the country's progression from conflict, to recovery, to development. The United States has been and remains a steadfast partner of all of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina; we reiterate our praise for the renewed commitment made earlier this year to the reforms needed to advance Bosnia and Herzegovina down the path to greater prosperity and security, and call on its political leaders to fulfill their responsibilities to that commitment.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.