



ICMP DECLARATION

“THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF PERSONS MISSING AS A CONSEQUENCE OF ARMED CONFLICT AND HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES”

SIGNING CEREMONY

Friday, 29 August 2014

Mostar City Hall, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Statement by Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for the Western Balkans
Ambassador Gerard Stoudmann

Ladies and Gentlemen, Excellencies,

On behalf of the Chair of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Swiss president Didier Burkhalter, I would very much like to congratulate the presidents of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia on their decision to sign today this declaration recognizing the responsibility of States in addressing the issue of missing persons.

I would also like to commend the work done by the ICMP in this process of identification and welcome the leading role it has played together with the ICRC in continuing this process and taking it beyond the region to other parts of the world.

In a year of challenges to stability and peace - that I believe to be unprecedented since the end of the Cold War - it is highly symbolic that this declaration is to be signed today. It is both a commitment to stability and normalization of relations and in itself a confidence building measure that paves the way to the future.

Why?

Firstly, because dealing with the legacy of the war and the issue of missing persons in particular is an integral part of the reconciliation process, without which there is no possibility of opening the way to a common European future. It is also an essential aspect of ensuring lasting peace and security in a region which was torn apart by war for too many years in the 1990s. Dealing with the past is actually dealing with the future.



Swiss Confederation

Secondly, because, we have to include the families. They are a crucial part of this process. Shedding light on the fate of missing persons is our duty towards their families and a necessary step in the individual and collective healing process, without which, once again, it is not possible to establish solid ground on which to build the future.

It must be acknowledged that substantial progress has been made in this region in recent years. Nevertheless, over 10,000 people remain unaccounted for. It is the responsibility of all States, those signing and others that have not yet signed, to clarify the fate of those still unaccounted for and to complete this process.

Last but not least, therefore, the signature of this declaration today is more than a symbolic gesture. It marks and is the starting point of a new regional dynamic of cooperation that will enable the remaining cases to be solved.

In this context, we must hope that this example of political wisdom set by your States today will spread to others in the region and even beyond.

The OSCE intends to continue facilitating and supporting the further development of the process in all regions where it has a mandate.

In particular, in accordance with its priorities, the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship will endeavor to encourage others to join. Others here, not only from this region but from other parts of the OSCE area too, where even as this very day goes by, we are unfortunately creating new cases of missing persons.

Congratulations on this important step.

We are very much looking forward to taking this process further.

Thank you very much.