

ICMP CHAIRMAN THOMAS MILLER

SPEECH FOR THE RECEPTION AT THE US AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE

15 July 2011, 7:00 PM

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to use this occasion to highlight two success stories.

One is the success story of a small, ad hoc organization that grew to become the world's leading international organization on missing persons from war, violations of human rights and natural disasters. It is the organization that I am proud to have recently become the chairman of, the International Commission on Missing Persons.

The second success story is that of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the manner it has addressed the issue of missing persons from the armed conflicts of the 1990's. Today, Bosnia and Herzegovina can claim to be the only country in the world that has accounted for two-thirds of those missing from conflict and crimes against humanity. It is the only country in the world with a state level structure – the Missing Persons Institute - that searches for persons regardless of their ethnic, religious or national origin. It is the only country in the world to have created a central list of missing persons, thus allowing the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina to speak with one voice regarding the exact number of missing persons and finally it is the only country in the world to have a Law on Missing Persons that enshrines the rights of victims to have information regarding the fate of their missing loved ones.

These two success stories are intertwined. My organization learned from your country; from the many heroes that embarked upon an unprecedented effort to search for the 30,000 persons that were missing following the cessation of conflicts; from the thousands of family members of the missing who became our teachers

and guided us, despite their pain, in building institutions, in creating legislation and finally in using a new technology, DN A, to accurately identify their loved ones. DNA technology has now revolutionized the way the world addresses the issue of missing persons from New York City following 9/11 to Thailand following the South East Asian Tsunami.

ICMP now maintains the world's largest, high throughput DNA identity testing system in the world. We have made over 18,000 identifications worldwide from the Western Balkans to Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and South East Asia. Our database houses over 150,000 biological samples. We have become the world's leader in promulgating best practice standards regarding how government should address the issue of missing persons.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the governments that have supported ICMP's work over these many years, including my own country that took the initiative 15 years ago in Lyon, France to create ICMP. I would also like to recognize the unyielding support of the Governments of The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, Spain the Czech Republic, Canada, Denmark, France, Italy, Poland, and most recently Turkey (our first OIC contributor). While these stakeholders have provided bilateral support the European Commission on behalf of all 27 members of the European Union has also provided critical funding and political support. ICMP receives contributions from over 30 nations.

ICMP now looks to these governments to continue to provide support to our work, not only our efforts in Bosnia and the Western Balkans, but our global efforts to assist governments around the world address the issue of persons missing from war, violations of human rights and natural disasters.

Thank you Ambassador Moon for hosting this event during a year that marks ICMP's 15 year anniversary.