

WAYS TOWARDS JUSTICE

PROPOSALS FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION: CALLS FOR HIGHER INVOLVEMENT OF GOVERNMENTS – CONCLUSIONS FROM THE UNDP INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BUILDING REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE INITIATIVES

Belgrade, 22. June, 2006; - Signs of a growing momentum for transitional justice issues, the need for higher involvement of governments, and the need to create a regional judicial panel and transfer of the archives of the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia to the region – are just some of the conclusions from the UNDP organised International Conference on “Building Regional Partnerships”, held last week in Belgrade Sava Centre.

Broad interest in transitional justice issues among 200 representatives from governments, judiciary, civil society and victim organisations are a sign of growing momentum for tackling outstanding issues on the regional level. It was reconfirmed by many participants during the three day conference that the governments in the region should take greater share of responsibility from the civil society in key areas - war crimes prosecutions, truth seeking, reparations and institutional reform. This calls for a greater inclusion of stakeholders, with possible addition of parliamentarians and other political actors.

Meddzida Kreso, President of the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, proposed a creation of a regional expert commission to examine harmonisation of penal policy in the region that would further support the transfer of cases between national courts. Sinisa Vazic, President of the Belgrade District Court and of the War Crimes Chamber seconded her motion, adding that the commission could also issue recommendations regarding admissibility of evidence from other countries, use of the concept of “command responsibility”, and concerning overall regional standardization of practice in war crimes prosecutions.

Notably, consensus was also reached among participants concerning the opening remark by Lance Clark, UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident Coordinator in Serbia and Montenegro that ICTY archives should find their permanent place within the region and that adequate set up should be found for its regional ownership.

The conference has inaugurated the Transitional Justice Programme jointly implemented by UNDP offices in Belgrade, Zagreb, Sarajevo, Podgorica and Pristina and promoted the findings of the UNDP Transitional Justice Assessment Survey in the former Yugoslavia. Conclusions from the working groups and from the conference internal survey will be published in a separate report.