

'Mission accomplished,' president of UN tribunal for Former Yugoslavia tells Security Council

6 December 2017 – After more than 24 years of operations, the United Nations tribunal set up to prosecute crimes committed during conflicts in the Balkans in the 1990s, has now completed all judicial work, the court's President told the UN Security Council on Wednesday.

"Despite all the sceptics, the naysayers, the deniers who, from the very beginning, embarked on a campaign against the Tribunal and have been at pains to question our legitimacy and integrity and portray a doomsday scenario, I am proud to appear before this esteemed Council today and say: [mission accomplished](#)," declared Carmel Agius, President of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia ([ICTY](#)), in his [final briefing](#) to the 15-member body.

Recalling the Security Council's decision to create the Tribunal back in May 1993, Mr. Agius stated: "In retrospect [...] the establishment of the ICTY was one of the international community's proudest moments."

Noting that the body had developed a completion strategy and delivered judgements in the final trial case against Ratko Mladic on 22 November and the final appeal case against *Jadranko Prlic et al.* on 29 November, Mr. Agius said that in supporting the creation of the court, his predecessors had put their signature on an important page in the history of international justice and the fight against impunity.

There was another history, however, he said, namely of those who were afraid to accept the Tribunal and even denounced it, "of those who did not choose to fight impunity, but, for reasons of political or personal gain, blind nationalism and ethnic hatred," preferred immunity and even glorified those who had committed atrocities.



Judge Carmel Agius, President of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), briefs the Security Council. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe



Serge Brannmertz, Prosecutor of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals ([MICT](#)), briefs the Security Council. UN Photo/Kim Haughton



Judge Theodor Meron, President of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (MICT), briefs the Security Council. UN Photo/Eskinder

Debebe



Security Council Meets on the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). UN Photo/Kim Haughton



Security Council Meets on the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). UN Photo. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

[←](#) [→](#)

The Tribunal's achievements did not begin and end in The Hague, where the body is headquartered, Mr. Agius continued. He was disturbed by the numerous crimes yet to be prosecuted before domestic courts in the Former Yugoslavia. The rise of revisionism and nationalism throughout the region could not be ignored.

"Do not delude yourselves; the absence of war does not mean peace," he said. Ending impunity for mass crimes is not the preserve of any one institution – it is a common goal that ties all together in the shared quest for justice, peace and stability.

In closing, President Agius stated: "As the international community now looks on while mass crimes continue to take place, even as I speak, and geopolitical roadblocks impede any kind of comprehensive justice solutions, we must not forget the political courage that sparked the ICTY's existence, the Tribunal's long trajectory, and the need to stay the course."

Beyond the Tribunal's success, reconciliation remains a significant challenge

Theodor Meron, President of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, affirmed that the Tribunal had made plain that even complex trials could and must be conducted in accordance with the panoply of due process guarantees. As a result, the principles of international law were stronger and, "accountability for grave crimes is increasingly the expectation rather than the exception."

Describing the current activities of the [Residual Mechanism](#), which will maintain the Tribunal's legacy and carry out its remaining functions, he said it is "serving as a new, effective and efficient model of international court" in carrying out duties such as preparations for administration disposition of records, in further developing its legal and regulatory framework and working on provision of assistance to national jurisdictions.

The fulfilment of the Mechanism's mandate depends on the ongoing support of the Council and the broader international community and on the commitment to all concerned to the invaluable legacies of the tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia.

In his remarks, the Prosecutor of the International Residual Mechanisms for Criminal Tribunals, Serge Brammertz, said his Office [remains focused](#) on expeditiously completing the limited number of trials and appeals transferred from the ICTY and on locating and arresting the remaining eight fugitives indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR).

He acknowledged that the Tribunal failed to achieve reconciliation in the Former Yugoslavia, where many still viewed convicted war criminals as heroes while victims and survivors were ignored and dismissed. “The reality is that there is still no true will within the region to accept the immense wrongdoings of the past and move forward – sadly, most of all among the political leadership,” he said.

Too many people listen to war criminals, who hide behind claims of collective responsibility, when in fact no community bore responsibility for what those men had done. He emphasized that justice is an essential precondition for achieving reconciliation.

Find out more about the ICTY and discover how its ground-breaking work changed the face of international humanitarian law [here](#)

[UN designates 2021-2030 ‘Decade of Ocean Science’](#)

6 December 2017 – The United Nations today designated the years 2021 to 2030 as the ‘Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development’ to boost international coordination and cooperation in research and scientific programmes for better management of ocean and coastal zone resources and reducing maritime risks.

The UN Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) will be leading the campaign.

“The [ocean is a new frontier](#) – it covers 71 per cent of the globe [but] we have explored less than 5 per cent. The Decade will ensure greater coordination of research,” said Audrey Azoulay, the Director-General of UNESCO, urging all stakeholders to join the endeavour.

“[We are] proud to be at the forefront of this effort,” she added.

Across the world, close to three billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity to meet their needs.

Oceans – critical for survival of all people across the planet – absorbs around a third of the carbon dioxide (CO₂) produced by humans and reduces the impact of climate change.

Given this important, the [2030 Agenda](#) and the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) call for specific action for the conservation and sustainable use the oceans, seas and marine resources (SDG 14).

The importance of oceans was also underscored at a major conference this June at the UN Headquarters, in New York.

However, the cumulative effects of human activities on this vital important, including the impact of pollution, warming and acidification are yet to be fully evaluated scientifically and surveying the ocean requires costly ships and equipment, satellite imaging, underwater robots and remotely controlled vehicles.

It also requires thousands of scientists collecting and analysing the data, either in laboratories or in marine environments.

“One of the priorities of the Decade will be to strengthen and diversify financial sources, particularly for small island developing States and least developed countries,” said UNESCO.

“This Decade, will provide a framework for international coordination and partnership to reinforce research capacities in marine sciences and the transfer of technology,” it added.

[UN study uncovers horrors of sexual violence against Syrian refugee boys and men](#)

6 December 2017 – A study carried out by the United Nations refugee agency has revealed disturbing details a little-known side to the Syrian conflict: sexual violence against boys and men.

The report, by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), was published on Wednesday, and compiled interviews with dozens of victims in Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan.

Interviews with 73 humanitarian personnel from 34 agencies were conducted, as well as 21 focus group discussions with 196 refugees. According to UNHCR, those interviewed for the study provided shocking accounts of what they, or others known to them, had experienced.

Reported forms of sexual violence included rape and mutilation of or shooting of genitals at point-blank range. Much of this was reported as occurring in detention or makeshift prisons. UNHCR researchers heard accounts of violence against boys as young as 10, and against men including those in their 80s.

The findings and recommendations presented in the report, entitled [We Keep it in Our Heart](#), offer a starting point for unpacking and addressing a complex, under-investigated issue.

Given the challenges in researching this taboo topic, sexual violence against men and boys is likely occurring under a variety of circumstances not identified in this exploratory study. Additional investigation and attention are imperative to clarify the scope of sexual violence against males, prevent this violence where possible, and effectively meet the needs of survivors.

Harrowing testimonies

Among the harrowing testimonies recounted is that of “Tarek,” detained during the war in his native Syria, and held in a darkened cell for a month with 80 other people. But those harsh conditions were the least of it.

Kept naked, he and other detainees were strung up by their hands at night, tortured with electric shocks to their genitals and gang raped by their captors, said UNHCR.

“They would come into the cell to violate us, but it was dark – we couldn’t see them. All we could hear were people saying, ‘Stop! Don’t! ... I thought we would die,” Tarek recalled.

A further read of the study reveals that Tarek’s experience is far from unique.

“These are most disturbing accounts [revealing just how grave the risk](#) of sexual violence has become both for women and girls and, as shown by this recent report, also men and boys,” said Volker Türk, UNHCR’s Assistant High Commissioner for Protection.

We are faced with a vicious cycle here of little help being available [...] and a culture of silence UN refugee agency protection chief Volker Türk

“And it’s clear too that we are faced with a vicious cycle here of little help being available, limited outreach to male survivors, inaccessible services, and a culture of silence – all of which reinforce a myth that this problem is rare,” he added.

The study makes a number of recommendations geared towards humanitarian agencies and others involved in working with refugees. These include the need for stronger prevention strategies, better confidentiality arrangements, protection against reprisals, improved survivor care, and strengthened awareness among humanitarian agencies and staff.

It also recommends that further research be done with a view to more effectively preventing and responding to sexual violence against males in conflict and displacement.

AUDIO: Horrors of sexual violence against Syrian boys and men revealed

[China tops patent, trademark and design filings in 2016 – UN agency reports](#)

6 December 2017 – Worldwide filings for patents, trademarks and industrial designs reached record heights in 2016 amid soaring demand in China, which received more patent applications than the combined total of applications received by the United States, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the European Patent Office, the United Nations intellectual property agency said Wednesday.

Innovators around the world filed [3.1 million patent applications](#) in 2016, up 8.3 per cent for a seventh straight yearly increase, according to the World Intellectual Property Office's annual report.

China accounted for 98 per cent of total growth, receiving about 236,600 of the nearly 240,600 additional patent filings.

Trademark applications jumped by 16.4 per cent to about seven million, and worldwide industrial design applications grew by 10.4 per cent to almost one million – both also driven by growth in China.

“The latest figures charting a rise in demand for intellectual property rights confirm a decade-long trend, where developments in China increasingly leave their mark on the worldwide totals,” said WIPO Director General Francis Gurry. “China is increasingly amongst the leaders in global innovation and branding.”

Patents

China's State Intellectual Property Office received the highest number of patent applications in 2016, a record total of 1.3 million. It was followed by the US Patent and Trademark Office at 605,571, the Japan Patent Office at 318,381, the Korean Intellectual Property Office at 208,830 and the European Patent Office at 159,358.

On a per-capita basis, patent filings in China ranked behind those in Germany, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the US.

Asia's share of all applications filed worldwide has increased from 49.7 per cent in 2006 to 64.6 per cent in 2016, primarily driven by strong growth in filings in China. Offices located in Asia received just over 2 million applications.

Trademarks

An estimated 7 million trademark applications covering 9.77 million classes were filed worldwide in 2016, 16.4 per cent more applications than in 2015, marking the seventh consecutive year of growth.

“The number of trademarks being sought around the world has increased three-fold since 2001, reflecting the importance of protecting branding assets in today’s business environment,” said Mr. Gurry.

The office of China had the highest volume of filing activity with a class count of around 3.7 million, followed by the US at 545,587, Japan at 451,320, the European Union at 369,970 and India at 313,623.

Industrial designs

Global industrial design filing activity in 2016 grew by 10.4 per cent to an estimated 963,100 applications containing 1.2 million designs. Design counts worldwide grew by 8.3 per cent, driven primarily by strong growth in China.

The office of China received applications containing 650,344 designs in 2016, corresponding to 52 per cent of the world total, followed by the EU at 104,522, the Republic of Korea at 69,120, Germany at 56,188 and Turkey at 46,305.

Among the top 20 offices, the fastest growth in design counts occurred in Iran, a 34.8 per cent increase, followed by Ukraine’s 17.4 per cent growth, China’s 14.3 per cent increase and the US’s 12.1 per cent growth.

Issue of Jerusalem must be resolved through direct negotiations between parties, UN chief stresses

6 December 2017 – In the wake of the announcement by the United States President recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres on Wednesday stressed that there is no alternative to the two-state solution and that Jerusalem is an issue that must be resolved through direct negotiations between the parties.

“In this moment of great anxiety, I want to make it clear: there is no alternative to the two-state solution. There is no Plan B,” said Mr. Guterres, speaking to the press at UN Headquarters in New York.

In his [remarks](#), the UN chief noted that it is only by realizing the vision of two states “living side-by-side in peace, security and mutual recognition,

with Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and Palestine, and all final status issues resolved permanently through negotiations," that the legitimate aspirations of both peoples will be achieved.

"I understand the deep attachment that Jerusalem holds in the hearts of so many people. It has been so for centuries and it will always be," he added.

I will do everything in my power to support the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to return to meaningful negotiations and to realize this vision of a lasting peace for both people.

He also noted that since he took up his post as UN Secretary-General, he has consistently spoken out against any unilateral measures that would jeopardize the prospect of peace for Israelis and Palestinians.

"For my part as the UN Secretary-General, I will do everything in my power to support the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to return to meaningful negotiations and to realize this vision of a lasting peace for both people," he stated.