

Throughout the tragic period of conflict in Southeast Europe, about which Co-Chairman Smith just spoke, members of the Helsinki Commission strongly supported the establishment of an international tribunal to prosecute those responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide in the former Yugoslavia. Indeed, it has been members of this Commission that often took the lead in ensuring adequate U.S. funding of the tribunal during its formation, as well as ensuring that cooperation with the tribunal was high on the United States' bilateral agenda with countries of concern.

The assassination of Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic in March, I believe, revealed the degree to which those responsible for war crimes and those involved in organized crime in Southeast Europe are linked. In some cases, the people are the same. Having prevented the region from advancing economically and politically in a newly united Europe, these people now thrive on the smuggling, trafficking and other illegal activity while the average and innocent citizen struggles to survive. It should be in the interest of every democratic authority in Southeast Europe to cooperate and cooperate fully with the tribunal, not just to vindicate themselves and their country but to make their own difficult job of leading reform and recovery a little bit easier.

Unfortunately, we have seen recalcitrance and hesitation in cooperation with the Tribunal, especially but not exclusively by some officials in Belgrade. It is inexcusable that some leading persons indicted by the Tribunal – Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic in particular – have yet to be transferred to The Hague and are still at large in Serbia or Bosnia. If documents or persons exist who can assist in prosecuted the crimes committed, it is imperative that the Tribunal have access to them, especially given the safeguards the Tribunal has for dealing flexibly with sensitive issues.

Hopefully, we are at a turning point in Belgrade's cooperation with ICTY and that outstanding issues like the apprehension of indictees and access to witnesses and archives will be quickly resolved. I look forward to the Chief Prosecutor's comments today.