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## **Statement by Alice Wairimu Nderitu, Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, on the introduction of amendments to the Criminal Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

(New York, 23 July 2021) The United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Alice Wairimu Nderitu, acknowledges the introduction of amendments to the Criminal Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina today, sanctioning the glorification of war criminals convicted by final and binding judgments and the denial of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Special Adviser Nderitu reiterated messages expressed during her 13-23 June visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina connected to the imperative of addressing the past as essential to rebuilding trust and build a future in which there is no space for denial of genocide, war crimes or crimes against humanity, and in which the suffering of all victims is recognized, no collective guilt is attributed and there is no glorification of crimes committed by any perpetrator.

In Special Adviser Nderitu's view, "denial of genocide, war crimes or crimes against humanity, as well as glorification of those who have committed such crimes, simultaneously feeds on and strengthens contested narratives about the past, the present and the future. It turns perpetrators and war criminals into heroes. It sows fear, mistrust and hate. It divides people, communities and States. It does not allow for healing and empathy. It also undermines the judicial decisions that have been made and therefore undermines justice. This is to the contrary of what societies which have experienced conflict and have a legacy of atrocity crimes require. It is unacceptable and must be condemned."

Likewise, it is essential to avoid attribution of collective guilt. "Crimes are committed by individuals, not by societies or communities. This is why criminal accountability and court adjudication of criminal allegations is so important. Working for individual accountability and countering allegations of collective guilt are parallel processes on the road towards healing and trust-building in post-conflict societies," said the Special Adviser.

Special Adviser Nderitu reiterated the need to pay respects and acknowledge the sacrifice of all victims and survivors and praised grassroots and local-level efforts in this direction across Bosnia and Herzegovina. "During my visit, I was honored to pay my respects to all victims of conflict and to learn the positive examples of municipalities where such efforts are done jointly, by all communities together," said the Special Adviser. "All victims deserve truth, justice, empathy and understanding, by everyone and at all times."

The Special Adviser also praised efforts aimed at overcoming divisions under the leadership of local officials and grassroots organizations, especially those taking place in locations highly impacted by past conflicts and which she visited last June. "From Zepce to Bosanski Petrovac, from Mostar to Stolac, there is ample evidence of increased community cooperation and joint work, at different levels and by different actors. These efforts are a means to restore mutual

understanding about past events and toward a common future. I salute such initiatives and encourage further efforts in this direction.”

In this vein, the Special Adviser called on all those in positions of responsibility at the State level to do their part in working together to promote an agenda based on the prioritization of such healing and trust-building needs. “Political, religious and community leaders, educators as well as the media have a responsibility to lead the way towards constructive dialogue based on trust, respect and dignity. In pursuing this path, they will continue to have my full support.”

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