

Video message by the Acting Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide,

Ms Pramila Patten

**High-level commemoration of the Srebrenica30 and International Day of Reflection
and Commemoration of the 1995 genocide in Srebrenica**

8 July 2025

Excellencies,

Representatives of survivors and families of victims,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It has been 30 years since the world was shaken by one of the worst atrocities committed on European soil since the Second World War.

Thirty years of unimaginable pain. Thirty years of struggle for restoration of dignity, justice and truth.

Today, thanks to the unwavering courage of the survivors – led by the unbreakable Mothers of Srebrenica, we mark 11th of July as the International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 genocide in Srebrenica. This day belongs to the victims and the survivors as well as those who perished in Srebrenica, and to those who never lost hope in the battle for memory and accountability.

For the last 30 years, this Day is also dedicated to laying to rest the remains of the victims. This year, the remains of five victims of the Srebrenica genocide will be laid to rest at the Srebrenica Genocide memorial site in Potočari. Yet, the remains of too many victims are yet to be found or identified. This causes excruciating pain to their families.

My thoughts are with them. They are not alone. They will never be. And my Office stands ready to support their fight for a dignified burial for their loved ones.

Just a few weeks ago, I was with these families in Sarajevo and in Srebrenica. They shared their stories, their sorrow, their visible and invisible scars.

And they shared with me – how they have channeled their traumatic and excruciating experiences into a powerful mission for justice, remembrance and prevention of future crimes.

Distinguished guests,

While the Mothers of Srebrenica continue to ensure that the genocide in Srebrenica is neither forgotten nor denied, the Memorial Center is today a unique place of prayer and reflection. Prayer for those who rest there, in peace, after the terrible pain inflicted on them, on their families, on their country, and on the whole of humanity. And reflection to ensure that the memory of these heinous crimes continue to teach future generations about the terrible cost of inaction when risk factors are all too present and about the imperative of prevention of the gravest international crimes.

The Memorial Center today is a space exhibiting life in a place where life was once denied completely and brutally. Here, the testimonials of the survivors and the stories of victims are gathered, honored and preserved.

Here, the sense of loss is tangible and will never fade away. But so are the signs of love and hope for a future free of genocide.

This love and hope are symbolized by the white flower of Srebrenica, blooming out of the darkest day in the modern history of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the overall region. The flower also symbolizes the commitment and perseverance of all those who continue working, day after day, to ensure that there is accountability for the crimes that have been committed, and who continue to spare no effort to build a peaceful Bosnia and Herzegovina free from the ghost of genocide.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The same perseverance which brought perpetrators to justice has defined not only Bosnia and Herzegovina but international justice globally.

On this point, let me be clear: The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, determined, conclusively and beyond reasonable doubt, that genocide was committed in Srebrenica in 1995.

The International Court of Justice as well as national courts have consistently reached the same conclusion.

While we acknowledge the collective failure to prevent the genocide in Srebrenica, we have a shared responsibility to preserve these proven facts as established by international courts, and to keep telling the stories of the victims and survivors in the face of genocide denial.

Genocide denial is an affront to victims, survivors and to our shared humanity. Prevention can never be effective where genocide denial and glorification of convicted war criminals are present. Ultimately, effective and comprehensive genocide prevention needs to be embedded in empathy, trust-building and respect for diversity.

We owe this to the victims, to the survivors and to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We owe this to the new generations across the region of the Western Balkans, who deserve and want to live free from the shadows of warmongering and divisions.

For them, it is my hope that the annual commemoration of the International Day will open a safe space for reflection and for dialogue to continue understanding and learning from the past.

In the memory of the victims, in dedication to the efforts of the survivors, and in fulfilment of our global and renewed commitment to preventing genocide and protecting human dignity for all.

Thank you.