

**Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Alice Wairimu Nderitu,**

**Video message to Srebrenica Collective Memory Conference organized by Srebrenica Memorial Center and World Jewish Congress**

**10 July 2023**

**[video message remarks]**

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank the organizers, Srebrenica Memorial Center, and World Jewish Congress, for the organization of this conference on such a pertinent topic. I care deeply for the people of Bosnia Herzegovina and especially for the survivors of the Srebrenica Genocide and in that regard, I am therefore sad not to have been able to join you today.

The focus for this year's commemoration on *memory and healing for the prevention of atrocity crimes* is very close to my mandate as the United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide.

I had the honor to visit Srebrenica Memorial Center twice since I took up my mandate, including last year on 11 July, for the 27<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide.

We know all too well the serious repercussions of failing to deal with a history of atrocity crimes. Atrocity crimes, in particular genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, impact generations. Healing is only possible with an acknowledgement that these crimes have happened and that societies are ready to learn from the past to address their root causes; Healing is possible when accountability too is ensured.

The denial of genocide and other atrocity crimes is an indicator of risk of future atrocities. This is well outlined in the Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes, developed by my Office.

Denial or distorting the facts of the Holocaust, and the Srebrenica genocide is an extreme form of hate speech that could constitute incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence, that is prohibited under international human rights law, and could itself constitute preparation for another genocide. It is often used for political gain and sow distrust, divisions, and hate. The impact on victims, survivors and their descendants is evident. They are retraumatized and faced with the burden of having to justify and explain atrocities they endured, even when courts of law have conclusively determined that these crimes occurred. This should not be their responsibility, but rather the responsibility of the society. The imperative to stand in solidarity with victims, and to prevent the risk of future atrocity crimes need to be larger than any narrow political gain. Remembering and learning from the past must be part of societal learning processes

that include preserving memory and educating people so that future generations can learn from the past and ensure that such horrors do not happen again. Such education needs to be based on established facts, such as the decisions of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

I saw first-hand during my visits to Bosnia and Herzegovina the impact of denial of past atrocity crimes, including the Srebrenica genocide. I remain deeply concerned over the impact it has on reconciliation and peace, in the country and wider region. The incredible work done by victims and survivors as well as those that stand in solidarity with them, who are working tirelessly every day to promote memory, healing as well as promoting inclusion and trust – must be commended and supported.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am especially glad to learn that this conference brings together those working on countering Holocaust denial and denial of the Srebrenica genocide. By joining up efforts I hope we can turn the tide on the awful impact that hate, denial, and distortion are having.

Last year, my Office, in partnership with the Jacob Blaustein Institute, published a policy paper titled *Combating Holocaust and Genocide Denial, Protecting Survivors, Preserving Memory and Promoting Prevention*. It points out that denial of past atrocity crimes is a warning sign of societal fragility and recurrence.

This work is especially important this year, as we are commemorating 75 years since the adoption of the Convention for the Prevention and the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide that was adopted to respond to the horrors of the Holocaust. The Convention and its obligation to prevent and punish the crime of genocide, is unfortunately as relevant today as it was 75 years ago.

To mark this important occasion, I am calling on all States that have ratified the Genocide Convention, and for those that are parties to it, to ensure its full domestication and implementation. This includes the obligation to prevent.

Led me conclude by reiterating my full support, and the support of my Office to this important work.

I look forward to seeing the outcome of your discussions today.

Thank you.