



Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kathleen Kavalec, addresses the Permanent Council on developments in the country and the Mission's work, Vienna, 27 February 2020. (OSCE/Micky Kroell)

PRESS RELEASE

OSCE Mission to BiH calls for a Supervisory Body for implementation of revised war crimes processing strategy

SARAJEVO, 6 October 2021 – The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) organized today an online conference for members of the state, entity and Brčko District (BD) judiciaries and legal practitioners to review key challenges to the domestic processing of war crimes cases.

Topics included the negative effects of the non-appointment of a Supervisory Body for monitoring the implementation of the Revised National War Crimes Processing Strategy; the transfer of cases from the State-level to entity and BD jurisdictions; and harmonization of case law.

"While the judiciary in BiH has made progress in processing war crimes, significant challenges remain, including the negative trends of decreasing completion and conviction rates, and the current backlog of more than 550 cases with known suspects in all jurisdictions," said Kathleen Kavalec, Head of the OSCE Mission to BiH.

"As time passes, it is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve justice, as victims, witnesses and perpetrators age and pass away. It is, therefore, critical that the BiH Council of Ministers appoints a Supervisory Body for monitoring the implementation of the Revised National War Crimes Processing Strategy without further delay, and that all institutions involved in the implementation of the Strategy fulfil their obligations," added Kavalec.

The conference was organized one year after the adoption of the Revised Strategy that aims to strengthen the oversight of the implementation of the Strategy and to improve the mechanism for

prioritization of war crimes cases and transfer of less complex cases from the State-level to entity and BD judiciary.

“Without the appointment of a Supervisory Body, both those goals remain elusive as there is no dedicated monitoring and overseeing of the process. It is concerning that cases continue to be transferred without adequate prior analysis of the complexity, most responsible perpetrators, and the relevance of cases to other events,” noted Kavalec.

Conference panellists included prominent judges, prosecutors, attorneys, and BiH Justice Ministry and High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council representatives, who discussed ways to remedy the current situation and move forward with more effective and efficient war crimes processing.

The OSCE Mission to BiH is mandated with strengthening human rights, democratic governance, and security co-operation. It is committed to working alongside domestic institutions to improve the effectiveness of war crimes prosecutions and to ultimately achieve justice for all victims.

For PDF attachments or links to sources of further information, please visit:

<https://www.osce.org/mission-to-bosnia-and-herzegovina/499840>

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