

Consultation Process on the RECOM Initiative

**An overview of thoughts,
suggestions and recommendations**

July - December 2009



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Consultation with the local community

Pula, Croatia,
July 1st 2009

The consultation was organized by the Center for Civic Initiative, Poreč, Croatia, and Documenta, Zagreb, Croatia. The gathering was attended by 25 participants representing various human rights organizations, victim' associations, families of missing persons organizations, youth organizations, women's groups, professional associations, and local authority of Istria. Speakers were Amir Kulaglič from Srebrenica (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Vesna Teršelič (Documenta, Croatia), and Eugen Jakovčić (Documenta, Croatia) and the discussion was moderated by Biserka Momčinović (Center for Civic Initiative, Pula, Croatia) and Goran Božičević (MIRamiDA Center, Grožnjan, Croatia). Radio Pula and TV Nova reported live from the consultations and Novi List daily and Glas Istre published an interview with Amir Kulaglič conducted by Mladen Radić and the story by Tatjana Gromača titled "Stop the silence and denial".

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations of the participants

What the victims and all normal people living in the states formed on the territory of the former Yugoslavia are dealing with in their everyday lives is silence and denial (...) Silence is a method used to justify the things you have not done and denial is used as an opportunity to relativize the things you did. This initiative has two goals: to stop the silence and denial and start building a platform for public discussion about crimes committed in recent wars. (Amir Kulaglič from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

All war crimes and all victims must be registered.

While preparing for this meeting today, I searched intensively for some persons who had testified, who had stayed behind their families and tried to find them, but I could not find them. Was it just the time that passed, did they just move (...). I wish that we can have all these crimes, disappearances, unsolved destinies, killings etc, registered in state registers. (Biserka Momčinović, Center for Civic Initiative, Poreč, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

Victims are afraid to tell their stories because those responsible for those crimes are still holding government positions. RECOM should try to instil fear in those people.

I returned to Srebrenica, I live there now. Unfortunately, every day I meet people whom I can positively identify as part of the war crimes machinery, who acted either as organisers, perpetrators, or instigators (...) and much to my chagrin, they are most often members of the local authority (...) and they are able to create an atmosphere of very hard life, full of fear and psychosis. (Amir Kulaglič from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

There are witnesses who were supposed to come here today and tell their stories. Why didn't they come? They didn't come because they are afraid to talk. There is a local sheriff in their community whom they seriously fear (...). This commission should achieve a gradual change in that paradigm. (Tatjana Gromača, Novi List daily, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

The question we should ask ourselves is whether there is readiness on the territory of the former Yugoslavia to feel compassion for victims from the other side and condemn perpetrators in our midst.

Euripides also said that the greatness of one nation is reflected in its ability to mourn for the victims of other nations and its readiness to condemn perpetrators of their own. I wonder whether the people in this region are entirely ready for that motto?! (Antun Peruško, Social-Democratic Party, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

Media can play a very significant role in evoking compassion with other side's victims.

The role of the media can be very important because they can convey these stories further (...). It is important to hear them on TV because people may finally understand: "there were victims on all sides in this war". (Vesna Teršelič, Documenta, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

RECOM should investigate the role of the

media in the preparation for war – some people listed to their TV or radio stations or read their papers, went to war and committed crimes.

Do you know that some crimes were created by the media? Do you remember what the media said about Kosovo before the war? It was all orchestrated through the media and we can safely say that many war crimes perpetrators were manipulated by the media. (Dževdet Hadžiselimović, Protagora Associations, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

When RECOM finishes its mandate, the Coalition for RECOM will still have to oversee the implementation of recommendations on reparations and the return of the refugees and internally displaced.

Once the commission offers its official report then it will be possible to work on additional explanations because the issue of just redress and the issue of return of refugees is still unresolved in Croatia. (Vesna Teršelič, Documenta, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

On behalf of the Social-Democratic Party I agree that there is a real need to create RECOM.

Taking in consideration all our differences, I can say for myself and on behalf of the party I represent here, the Social-Democratic Party (SDP) that I absolutely support this approach and the need to create RECOM (...). I believe that the SDP will become a member of the Coalition. (Antun Peruško, Social-Democratic Party, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

Civil society in Croatia must not accept the concept in which destruction, killings, and persecution are adopted as values of the Homeland War.

The Justified Homeland War in Croatia has at one point in time turned into a story of the dignity of the Homeland War. In its nature, every war is a criminal act. It constitutes destruction and bloodshed. People can be dignified, not wars (...). In Croatia some people are trying to impose hate destruction and bloodshed as the virtues of the Homeland War. Are we going to accept that destruction, bloodshed, killings, persecution, and annihilation of everything as virtues of the Homeland War? No, I don't think

we can. (Mladen Momčinović, Center for Civic Initiative, Poreč, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

In order to win over the public we have to hear the voice of victims.

We need to make our advance towards civil society more aggressively. First of all we must be present in the media. Be loud. Be present. (...) Let's make gigantic size bill boards showing the bodies of the victims. (...) Let's remind people that the body they are looking at while walking down the street is someone's mother, father, son, or brother and that he was killed in that very place just two days ago. (Tatjana Gromača, Novi List daily, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

The voice (...) of these victims must be heard, we have to campaign for it very aggressively because (...) people don't like to revisit the past, especially those who had no bad experience in the war like us in Istria (...). We only saw the war on television. (Denis Sgagliardi, Zum Association of Young People Pula, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

I think that is too strong to say, (...) a campaign yes, aggressive no. We must not be aggressive (...) Let's stay away from all things that may cause problems. We have to be very thoughtful and cautious. (Dževdet Hadžiselimović, Protagora Associations, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

Members of RECOM should be persons of integrity, well respected professionals in their own fields, acceptable in the entire region and able to resist any form of pressure. Victims should also be members of RECOM.

Members or RECOM tasked with establishing the facts about the past should be able to work independently, free of any pressure, and to the best of their professional and moral ability, the way it is to be done in such commissions. (Denis Sgagliardi, Zum Association of Young People Pula, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

One of the things we should agree on is that members of RECOM must be people of special moral credibility, (...) well respected throughout the entire region (...) Politicians should be excluded (...) I believe

ve that members of this commission should not only be scientists, sociologists, psychologists, lawyers, but also representatives of certain associations in order to make sure the voice of the victims is heard (...). Victims are usually asked to give information while their needs are rarely discussed. (Amir Kulaglič from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

Young people tend to forget and relativize events from the past. The issue of the past should be resolved today, while it is still fresh in our minds.

Young people easily accept the theory of forgetfulness; put your head under the carpet and pretend nothing happened. If we forget it, if we act like nothing happened (...) most of us are inclined to relativize the crimes that happened. (Tanja Carić, Grammar School, Pula Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

What I don't want to happen is to argue with my friends in sixty years about the Homeland War. So, that has to be resolved now, while still fresh and that's a good thing. (Denis Sgagliardi, Zum Association of Young People Pula, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

It is critically important that the facts find their way into documents, school text books, curricula, and education. That is the only sure way to prevent different interpretations of history.

I had an opportunity to analyse history books from Republika Srpska, from BiH Federation, from Croatia, and from Serbia and I was not at all surprised to find out that each interpreted the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia differently. And that's a problem that stands in the way to the process of establishing the truth. For that reason I strongly believe that such a regional approach is the only way to find the truth. (Lidija Lešić, history and philosophy professor from Poreč, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

I am really interested to see some of the results of your work in official state documents, curriculums, text books, and in the overall education process (...). We should primarily take care of the interests of our children. That's crucial. (Dževdet Hadžiselimović, Protagera Associations, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

Our Ministry of Education and our education do not include in their curriculums what we are discussing here, which is extremely important. (Tanja Carić, Grammar School, Pula Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

Government misuses victims' associations who often sound as the government itself and not as representatives of victims.

Victims, too, will often adopt the silent approach and denial or minimization of other nation's victims. The reason is they are being politically misused or manipulated with so that they often sound as their respective governments and not at all as representatives of victims. (Amir Kulaglič from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

The goal of the Initiative for RECOM is to create an atmosphere in which it will be highly inappropriate and unacceptable to deny a war crime.

I think it will be a great success of this Initiative if we reach a stage when it will truly be undesirable and unacceptable to deny crimes committed against anyone. (Eugen Jakovčić, Documenta, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

The goal of RECOM can be reconciliation but that is a process that requires a dialogue, a lot of questions and a lot of different opinions.

And when we say 'reconciliation', we don't imply a moment when we all hug and kiss and say that what happened in the past does not matter any longer. When we say 'reconciliation' we think of an approach that requires this kind of discussions, questions, the entire dealing with the past system. Reconciliation as a process, but as a goal, reconciliation that means this kind of conflict will not happen again. (Goran Božičević, MIRamiDA, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

A process that will come out of such an initiative is far more important to me in this sense than in a technical sense, who will become a member, what is our mandate going to be, how we are going to be organized etc (...). It is imperative to go to as many places as possible (...) and finally open up a space where all this issues will be discussed seriously and

freely from various points of view (...). Because that is the main prerogative to start solving the problem. (Mladen Momčinović, Center for Civic Initiative, Poreč, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

The RECOM Initiative can be used by other societies having similar problems to fight evil.

I strongly believe we are building machinery capable of handling evil in some future wars. There are no mechanisms on this planet able to stand up to evil. (Goran Božičević, MIRamiDA, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

RECOM can inspire court proceedings to be more efficient and have better results in processing war crimes.

I expect RECOM to be able to exert an additional pressure and be educational, raise awareness in our society, especially in the judiciary. (...) because I think that the idea alone that facts are going to be registered anew may be helpful for our judiciaries to be more efficient and have better results in processing war crimes. (Biserka Momčinović, Center for Civic Initiative, Poreč, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

It is necessary to include political parties and religious communities in the whole process.

Religious elites and highly respected religious officials were against establishing the facts. That hurts (...) because I expect them to be the ones to teach us love, tolerance, and understanding instead of encouraging xenophobia. (Amir Kulagić from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

I believe we have mentioned earlier our intention to talk to religious leaders, which is very good, because in this region, religion and nationality are usually intertwined which was a major cause for mobilization on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. And secondly, I think it is very important to talk to politicians. (Mladen Momčinović, Center for Civic Initiative, Poreč, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

In Croatia, especially in Istria, it is necessary to organize consultations with minorities which

will be able to see their own interest in getting involved in this process.

I am sure we can organize the same thing here with organizations of national minorities which are very well organized and which will be able to see their interest in getting involved in this and so on. (Mladen Momčinović, Center for Civic Initiative, Poreč, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

Consultations on the Initiative for RECOM should be organized as public gatherings, open to all interested citizens.

It would be a good idea to organize these consultations in towns as open-type gatherings, open to all interested citizens (...) to inform them about RECOM by distributing flyers in mail boxes. (Tatjana Gromača, Novi List daily, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Pula, Croatia, July 1st 2009.)

Consultation with the local community

**Zvornik, BiH
July 18th 2009**

The consultation was organized by the Anima 2005 Association and the Association of the families of imprisoned and missing members of the Zvornik municipality (BiH) and was attended by 22 participants (representatives of victims' associations, members of families of killed veterans and veterans, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, religious institutions and media. Representatives of the Office of the High Commissioner for Bosnia and Herzegovina, members of the Organization and Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) participated in the debate. Consultations were opened by Mevludin Lupić (Association of the families of imprisoned and missing members of the Zvornik municipality, BiH), Branko Todorović, (The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republika Srpska, BiH), and Nataša Kandić (The Humanitarian Law Center), and the discussion was moderated by Vehid Šehić (The Forum of Tuzla Citizens, BiH).

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations of the participants

Members of RECOM should be morally and professionally well established individuals enjoying public respect. The civil society must have a deciding role in both defining the criteria for the selection of RECOM members and in the actual process of member selection.

Persons to be elected members of the commission should enjoy the undivided support of the society, they should be honourable persons liked by the general public. (Branko Todorović, The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republika Srpska, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

The commission should be composed of ethically credible persons, who are experts in their respective fields and who are able to properly interpret established and verified facts. Why is that necessary? Because we live in a society which is especially exposed to political and religious manipulation by political and clerical elites who try to influence our feelings and opinions whenever possible. (Amir Kulagić from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

It is important to engage experts, young people, and individuals with high ethical standards. (Zekerijah Hadžić, Association of College Students from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

The commission must be independent from the influence of its founders and it is important that civil societies in the region have an influential role in defining the criteria and in the member selection process itself. If we allow the participating governments to elect individuals whom they can easily influence, I am afraid we are not going to be able to reach our goal. (Amir Kulagić from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

It is important to enable perpetrators to speak in public about the crimes they committed in order to help the public find out the truth about these crimes.

Now we can also ask the question about how it will be received in Bosnia and Herzegovina if a war crime perpetrator is given an opportunity to address the commission, and if it is reported by the media for the victims to watch it, and so on (...). Many would say that it is actually (...) a good opportunity

for some of the perpetrators to publicly speak about the things he or she participated in or did personally. (Branko Todorović, The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republika Srpska, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

Public hearings of victims and witnesses are indispensable because they can help build a feeling of solidarity with victims so clearly missing at the moment.

Sometimes public speaking (of victims and witnesses) can be, first of all, an invitation to society to build solidarity with victims which we in Bosnia and Herzegovina, obviously don't have today. (Branko Todorović, The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republika Srpska, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

It is necessary to provide for a more active role of civil society organizations in order to form the commission sooner. Once the commission is formed, civil society organizations can monitor its activity.

I think that such gatherings, this type of activity of non-governmental organizations and various other organizations can help speed up the process of forming the commission. (Zekerijah Hadžić, Association of College Students from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

All states in the region should support the creation of the commission (...). The non-governmental sector from the states in the region should act as a supervisory body for that institution formed by the regional governments. (Zorana Petković, Osvit Radio Station, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

There is a dilemma whether war crimes perpetrators should be granted a general pardon or just offered less severe sentences for the crimes they committed.

I believe that there is no such information, no matter who provides it, that deserves a general pardon (...). The whole point of sentencing is to prevent something like that happening in the future. (Zekerijah Hadžić, Association of College Students from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultations with members of local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

I think that it is a good example to hear the victims speak (...) but also to allow the war crimes perpetrators to talk. The issue of the level of amnesty should be left for the consideration of professionals (...). The admission of guilt should not necessarily lead to a general pardon. (Mustafa Muharemović, Medglis of the Islamic Community in Zvornik, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

Having in mind the fact that I still have not found the bodies of most of my dead family members, I am in favour of the idea to hear war crimes perpetrators before this commission, but only if they can provide information about mass graves, individual victims, etc. (...) I am 50 years old. I may not have too much time left to wait to find them. Maybe in Srebrenica, many women who lost their children or their husbands don't have time to wait. That is why I think they should be given a chance to speak. It should be up to the commission to decide whether these people should be granted pardon or not. (Amir Kulagić from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

The mandate of the commission should include the role of the media in preparing for the war.

I think that the role of the media in creating a war-propagating atmosphere in the years preceding the conflict should be clearly pictured (...) and I think that the commission should tackle the issue of the incitement of nationalistic ideologies on all sides. (Samir Paljić, Local community Kula Grad in Zvornik, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

It is necessary that the commission deals with the causes of the war, especially the role of the Yugoslav National Army and the international community.

I believe that the commission should also depict the responsibility and the role of the military leadership, i.e. the General Staff of the Army of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (...). It was the weapons of the Yugoslav National Army that these crimes were committed with. Further, the commission should also investigate the role of the international community in that period, what it was like (...) especially on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, when the arms embargo was imposed upon the unarmed people while all other sides to the conflict were able to obtain arms. (Samir Paljić, Local community Kula Grad in

Zvornik, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

The commission should primarily deal with the issue of finding the missing. In order to solve the problem of finding the missing, it is necessary to secure the cooperation of all levels of government, from municipalities to the army and the police.

I welcome every initiative whose goal is to advance the approach to solving our problems, primarily the problem of finding the missing. (Radomirka Duvnjak, The Committee for Finding Missing Persons, Municipal Organization of Killed Veterans in Vlase-nica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

We are still searching for 500 persons from the area of the municipality of Zvornik. In other words, we are trying to locate mass graves. That is the main reason we (the Association of the Families of Imprisoned and Missing Persons from the Zvornik Municipality) signed the admission form to become members of the Coalition for RECOM. (Mevludin Lupić, (Association of the families of imprisoned and missing members of the Zvornik municipality, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

It is tragic that even 14 years after the end of the war we still have so many missing (...) I think that every victim deserves to be regain his or her identity and a memorial, in other words to be given a proper burial (...) I am sure that local communities in the area where executions were conducted should know where they were buried. I am deeply convinced that this commission should pressure these local communities in the process of searching for the missing persons, including former military and civilian authorities. (Samir Paljić, Local community Kula Grad in Zvornik, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

The commission should work on the creation of a list of victims and perpetrators.

I agree (...) that this commission should name perpetrators of war crimes because ... It is good to have a list of perpetrators of those war crimes if we are going to have a list of victims, regardless of what nation they come from. (Samir Paljić, Local community Kula Grad in Zvornik, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

It is necessary to form a partnership with the media in order to secure an unobstructed information flow to the public about the war crimes committed in the recent wars. The media should also try to dedicate more space to promoting positive stories.

I think that what we need is a serious reform and significant steps forward which includes not only the media dedicating more space to the victims but also to noble acts going on now and those that have happened in the past, recent or more distant past (...) We have heard a short while ago about the role of the media during the war. That is undoubtedly a topic to be researched, but at the same time the media should be burdened with the role of a significant participant in the overall healing process of the society. (Mustafa Muharemović, Medzlis of the Islamic Community in Zvornik, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

We have heard here today on a few occasions that the media are being called to the responsibility and I agree with it that the media can help in the process of establishing the facts about war crimes. (Hiba Ramić, Mezarje Foundation, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

RECOM should be mandated to investigate the role of individuals and institutions.

What is this commission going to deal with, individuals or institutions? I think that it is more important for the commission to deal with institutions because that will lead to individuals who committed all those war crimes. (Zekerijah Hadžić, Association of College Students from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

And if you ask me what the commission should deal with primarily, individuals or institutions, well, I think that is inseparable. We have to realize that a war crime is a very sophisticated process which involves ideals, ideologies, instigators, and executors. (Amir Kulagić from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

RECOM should deal with the acts of individuals but also with the acts of institutions (...) military, civilian defence, Ministry of the Interior (MUP),

municipalities (...). Regardless of the nationality of the victims, it was the civilian defence was in charge of collecting and driving away the remains. So, by approaching the institutions, we will reach the responsible individuals or at least those who can help us discover mass graves. (Hiba Ramić, Mezarje Foundation, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

RECOM should cooperate directly with the judiciary.

Most of the crimes committed on the territory of the Zvornik municipality... are being processed in courts. It is an ongoing process and nobody has been found criminally responsible yet. (...) This commission should be able to cooperate closely with the Office of the War Crimes Prosecutors for a more efficient, so to speak, exchange of information and facts about war crimes. (Mevludin Lupić, (Association of the families of imprisoned and missing members of the Zvornik municipality, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

Regional parliaments should adopt legal acts about the use of the facts established by RECOM as evidence in court proceedings.

In the course of these consultations we will have to pay attention to whether the facts established by commission will be admitted in courts as evidence. (...) That may lead to a need for the regional parliaments to adopt decisions which may in turn lead to the adoption of amendments of the Criminal Procedure Code, so that the findings of this commission can be admitted in courts as evidence. (Vehid Šehić, the Forum of Tuzla Citizens, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

RECOM should have three goals: establishing the facts, verifying the facts, interpreting the facts.

Why is this commission named 'regional commission for establishing facts'? Very often people ask why its name isn't 'a regional commission for establishing the truth'. Truth is a relative concept and each and every one of us has their own perception of truth. When it comes to Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are at least three different truths (...) that of the Bosniaks, the Serbs, and the Croats, (...). I am more in favour of keeping the name 'regional commission for establishing the facts.' Secondly, this commission

should not only (...) remain at the level of establishing the facts because many facts have already been established (...) so that this commission should work on verification of already established facts, especially if those are the facts established by the judiciary in an unbiased judicial process. And thirdly, this commission should strive to properly interpret the established facts. (Amir Kulagić from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

RECOM should investigate events dating from 1990.

I suggest that we start with the period from 1990. (Hiba Ramić, Mezarje Foundation, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

Victims expect that RECOM will be also mandated to initiate reparations programmes.

RECOM should definitely tackle the issue of reparation programmes for victims. (Mustafa Muharemović, Medglis of the Islamic Community in Zvornik, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

We have to give our contribution to speed up the process so that the victims can receive satisfaction. And satisfaction means having truthful information, bury loved ones properly, have a place where you can go and face yourself, your worst nightmares, your horrible dreams. (Amir Kulagić from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

Knowing the facts about war crimes committed in the past may prevent their recurrence in the future.

But, please, when it comes to the past, we have to be clear about what really happened. Why? So it should not happen again. If we surrender to the past, stick out a white flag on which anyone can write whatever they please, I am afraid that my son and your children, God forbid, will become new victims. (Amir Kulagić from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

We want to inform young people about what happened by presenting the established facts about the crimes, thus making them able to take responsibility

for the future. (Alma Mašić, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Zvornik, BiH, July 18th 2009.)

Consultation with the local community

**Knin, Croatia,
August 4th 2009**

The consultation with the local community in Knin, Croatia, were organized by the Drniš Association of Women (Croatia), I Want Home, Knin (Croatia), and Documenta, Zagreb (Croatia). The gathering was attended by 30 participants and monitors, including representatives of victims' associations, associations of refugees returning home, both Knin communities, and members of the Coalition for RECOM in Croatia.

Public testimony of victims represented a focal part of consultations held in Knin. Jovan Berić (Varivode), Milena Perčin (Drniš), and Radoslav Bobanović (Knin) testified before the audience. Ratko Gajica, member of the Croatian Parliament and a member of the SDSS also addressed the participants.

Speakers were Bogdan Ivanišević (International Center for Transitional Justice/ICTJ), Vesna Teršelić and Eugen Jakovčić (Documenta, Croatia). Vesna Teršelić and Eugen Jakovčić moderated the discussion.

Croatian Radio Knin and New TV station reported on the consultation in their news programmes, while Novi List reported in depth on the conclusions.

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations of the participants

In addition to informing the public, the goal of the consultation was to change the situation in the field.

The whole consultation process (...) here in Knin has the primary goal to present the Initiative for RECOM (...) but also we want to (...) influence changes in the field (...) (Eugen Jakovčić, Documenta, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Knin, Croatia, August 4th 2009.)

It is necessary to leave a clean slate for future

generations, to name the victims and perpetrators in order to avoid repeating the same mistakes in the future.

We have to be critically aware of what we have been through and understand what today is and also what tomorrow is (...) for us, participants in the events of that time; (...) we have to leave a clear and clean slate behind us for those who are yet to come so that they will have a chance at living a better life in this area when their time comes. It is a fact that we will not be able to live without the truth regardless of how painful it is. (Radoslav Bobanović, victim from a “Stara Bolnica” Serbian run prison camp in Knin, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Knin, Croatia, August 4th 2009.)

Who tortured us? We know that. We also know who didn't. Not all Serbs can be held responsible, just like not all Croats can be blamed for crimes committed against members of other ethnic groups. War crimes are not subject to the statute of limitation, but just like the victims, the perpetrators have their names, too, and that's what we need to find out. (Radoslav Bobanović, victim from a “Stara Bolnica” Serbian run prison camp in Knin, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Knin, Croatia, August 4th 2009.)

Serbian and Croatian victims want to help each other to discover the truth about the suffering of victims from other ethnic communities and they do not want to be held responsible for the crimes committed by members of their own ethnic communities.

I would like people, no matter where they are, to come and help us, just as I would like to help, find out the truth about certain crimes and stupid things done in the past (...) and who really did it. I don't want to be blamed for something somebody did out of pure stupidity. Not because they were loyal Serbs or Croats, but for reasons I cannot explain. (Radoslav Bobanović, victim from a “Stara Bolnica” Serbian run prison camp in Knin, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Knin, Croatia, August 4th 2009.)

RECOM can help discover the perpetrators of different crimes because in order to make sure that the two different ethnic groups can live together again, we need to demonstrate that individuals and not the entire nation were responsible for particular crimes.

“What do you have to talk to them about, they killed your parents, and you are sitting with them.” (...) That's not how I think (...) because I do not believe that every Croat is responsible for the crimes committed, but individuals, whose names are unfortunately not yet known. That is why I am looking forward to seeing this initiative up and running because I truly hope this can help name all war crime perpetrators which will help us go in a better direction. (Jovan Berić, Serb from Zadar, victim, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Knin, Croatia, August 4th 2009.)

I will do my best until the end of my life to deal with the truth. Not all people are guilty, not on either side. There were many mistakes and failures that we witnessed (...) especially those of us who found ourselves on opposing sides, but life goes on and I don't think we can live together until we all realize that it is an individual and not the whole nation we should blame. (Milena Perčin, Croatian women from Drniš, victim, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Knin, Croatia, August 4th 2009.)

All of us, including the victims, need to deal with the past and the events that survived, because without it there will be a repeated rise of extremism and there will be more evil in store for us.

To be quite honest (...) I don't like to analyse the past too much. However, I am aware of the fact that for as long as we refuse to deal with our past, the events we survived, personally and individually, and until we speak openly within our community about it, we cannot have a lasting peace and extremism will rule; (...) evil that I don't want to see ever again will prevail once more. (Milena Perčin, Croatian women from Drniš, victim, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Knin, Croatia, August 4th 2009.)

Ordinary people have understanding and they are able to reconcile.

I am convinced that among ordinary people there is the capacity to understand these ideas you are presenting her and, generally speaking, there is a huge capacity amongst the ordinary people to reconcile. It just has to be revealed and put under the spotlight. (Ratko Gajica, member of the Croatian Parliament, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Knin, Croatia, August 4th 2009.)

Reconciliation should be the primary goal of RECOM and public testimonies of victims can certainly contribute to that goal.

The investigation of crimes per se, dealing with the truth, research without an epilogue (...) I am thinking only how to incorporate that into the reconciliation process because that is very important. Reconciliation is the only necessary aspect. Only a few of us heard the testimony of these people today and many people will never have a chance to hear it. These testimonies can help us find those who were on both sides. (Ljubo Manojlović, Serbian Democratic Forum, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Knin, Croatia, August 4th 2009.)

RECOM should cooperate with authorities, but politicians should not be allowed to interfere with the work of RECOM.

The question is how to preserve the innocence of this commission from politicians? They could be dangerous if allowed to enter too deep into the whole thing, while on the other hand, they have to be included (...) how to obtain information (...) each government will have a petty interest of its own in whatever is going on here. (Ljubo Manojlović, Serbian Democratic Forum, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Knin, Croatia, August 4th 2009.)

Initiative for RECOM makes sense, but the courts can do more for victims.

I think that this initiative does make sense to a point, but I think that it will not be able to measure up to what a court may promise to do. (Jovan Berić, Serb from Zadar, victim, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Knin, Croatia, August 4th 2009.)

The Coalition for RECOM and civil society along with international organizations and government institutions will be equally obligated to implement recommendations.

Each report contains its recommendations regarding the established facts, but it also contains suggestions for compensation programmes for the victims. And it is very important that the Coalition monitors the implementation of these recommendations (...). Normally, the goal of the Coalition is to constantly watch what is going on in that area (...). Different international institutions and victims' associations as well as human rights associations (...) are responsible to

cooperate in the process of the implementation of the recommendations. (Vesna Teršelič, Documenta, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Knin, Croatia, August 4th 2009.)

The consultations process and the collection of a million signatures will secure the legitimacy of the initiative and prevent it from being ignored by the government.

In order to obtain a broad based legitimacy for the commission it is important that these consultations continue and it is also important to provide those signatures, (...) but what is important is that representatives of the Coalition will be standing out in streets talking to people and it matters how they will present the ideas we have (...). That may be a way to communicate directly with people and gain support for the creation of this commission. Then it will be really difficult for politicians to ignore the whole initiative. (Mario Mažić, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Knin, Croatia, August 4th 2009.)

Young people in Croatia want to know the facts about the past because they define the future.

It is very important to me to stress that young people want to know the facts. We want to know the truth; we want to be a part of the dealing with the past process. That is very important for us because it influences the way we are going to build our future. For us, this commission is important at the level of dealing with the past and learning about the events of the past. For us it is important at the level of transferring something to new generations. (Emina Bužinkić, Young People of Croatia Network, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Knin, Croatia, August 4th 2009.)

I very much like it that consultations with the local community are included in this consultation process because in all post-Yugoslav states there are areas heavily affected by the war although the people who lived in that region are not, strictly speaking, victims. Therefore, I believe that it is very important to hold local consultations and that the whole Coalition for RECOM has understood the necessity of that process (...) for the small, local communities where people could not otherwise be heard. (Slaven Rašković, Documenta, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Knin, Croatia, August 4th 2009.)

Local consultation with victims' associations

**Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo
September 5th 2009**

The local consultation with victims' associations was organized by the "May 22" Association of the Families of the Missing, Kosovo and was attended by 41 participants, mainly family members of the missing. Speakers were Ylber Maxhuni (Youth Step, Kosovo), Valdete Idrizi (CBM, Kosovo) and Nataša Kandić (Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia) and the discussion was moderated by Valdete Idrizi (CBM, Kosovo), and Avni Melenica, ("May 22" Association of the Families of the Missing, Kosovo).

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations of the participants

Associations of families of missing Albanians should have a joint platform regarding the Initiative for RECOM without some associations acting independently.

We are an alliance of 19 associations and we have our joint council. And Mr. Avni should talk to the council, and other associations should also form their councils and they should be consulted so that we can all be unanimous with respect to an issue such as the RECOM initiative. (Xhafer Veliju, Pengu i Lirisë, Kosovo, Local consultation with victims' associations, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, September 5th 2009.)

Serbs and Albanians should work together and communicate with each other because that is the only way to resolve the issue of missing persons.

Now I understand that we have to work together closely (...). If the Serbs and the Albanians don't cooperate, if we fail to communicate with each other with regards to this question, we will never be able to solve a single issue. (Xhafer Veliju, Pengu i Lirisë, Kosovo, Local consultation with victims' associations, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, September 5th 2009.)

Kosovo media are not interested in the activity of the families of the missing. Even 10 years after the crime in Vučitrn/Vustrri, no TV station has ever reported on the anniversary of the crime.

Since May 22 when we started holding meetings and marking anniversaries of the crime, not a single media representative came to report about it, not a single camera. TV Priština (...) TV 21 (...) they had to come. KTV, also, and so on. It has been ten years that we gather on every 22nd of the month in Vučitrn/Vustrri, but no one comes to report about it. That's a shame. (Mahmut Syla, victim's family member, Local consultation with victims' associations, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, September 5th 2009.)

Perpetrators of the war crime in Vučitrn/Vustrri are in Kosovo and they are free men.

I am really angry with the government. I know first and last names of persons who committed the crime on May 22, but has a single one of them been arrested? No. They are in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, that's where they move freely, in Priluzje, Gojbuljame, etc (...). It's a shame. (Mahmut Syla, victim's family member, Local consultation with victims' associations, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, September 5th 2009.)

We have the exact names of all members of the so-called "crisis headquarters". Their first and last names are on the list we found in the municipal assembly building. We informed representatives of the international community about it and the president of the municipality, but they did absolutely nothing although it is clear that these persons organized the massacre. (Musli Melenica, victim's family member, Kosovo, Local consultation with victims' associations, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, September 5th 2009.)

For the families of the victims it is most important to receive mortal remains of their missing family members and give them a proper burial. The Initiative for RECOM is the only hope for the families.

We would like to support this initiative on behalf of the families of the missing and God willing, together, and with our governments, we will be able to find our missing family members (...) my biggest satisfaction in life would be to find my father, to know where his grave is. I did not come here for lunch or for money, I came to offer my support to the families of the missing and all those who were unable to come here today. (Naser Kadriu, victim's family member, Kosovo, Local consultation with victims' associations, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, September 5th 2009.)

My name is Musli Melenica and there are five missing persons in my family and I want you to know that I support this Initiative and I want you to keep up what you are doing. The initiative is very appropriate and I am sure that all participants of this gathering support it. (Musli Melenica, victim's family member, Local consultation with victims' associations, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, September 5th 2009.)

I would like to welcome you all here and to congratulate you on this initiative. You have done a good job just by starting it. I am a family member of a missing person. Families of missing persons meet every day (...) those of us who are in Kosovo (...) but most of them are abroad and they cannot know how often we meet here. (Fatime Melenica, victim's family member, Kosovo, Local consultation with victims' associations, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, September 5th 2009.)

My name is Isa Latifi and I represent the Association of Political Prisoners. I also support this idea. It is very good (...). It is clear that people have their interests; they are pursuing them all the time (...) that is why I repeat one more time, thank you to all who initiated this issue. (Isa Latifi, Association of Political Prisoners, Kosovo, Local consultation with victims' associations, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, September 5th 2009.)

Victim's family members suffer greatly not only because of the unsolved destiny of their missing family members but also because of poverty and lack of care.

We need to be careful about one thing – how many times are we going to take these people through the ordeal of that day without actually doing anything for them. (Vehbi Hallil, lawyer, Kosovo, Local consultation with victims' associations, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, September 5th 2009.)

We need to be very cautious every time someone opens up an initiative like this or similar. No one has done anything for these people, not the government and certainly not some associations (...) Missing persons' family members carry one pain, the fate of their missing ones, but they also suffer from economic hardship. (Vehbi Hallil, lawyer, Kosovo, Local consultation with victims' associations, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, September 5th 2009.)

We don't want them to talk. We want results. Loud and clear, what our government is doing that's all hear-say. We want to talk about our economic hardship, we

are all suffering; we have orphans. We want results, not speeches. (Mahmut Sylja, victim's family member, Local consultation with victims' associations, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, September 5th 2009.)

Kosovo laws regulating rights of families of missing persons are inadequate.

In order to be able to get some sort of a formal document in the municipal building I need to file a document proving I am not paying taxes. If I go to see a physician, he will ask for a healthcare card, and if I tell him that my three sons were murdered, he would tell me right away that I am lying. I receive 130 euros in compensation for one of my dead sons, as if the other two were not mine. I do not receive anything for the other two. (Arif Zeka, victim's family member, Kosovo, Local consultation with victims' associations, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, September 5th 2009.)

It is necessary to organize consultations with victims' families in order to receive information about their needs.

It is very important to organize consultations with victims' families in order to find out what their real needs are, what they are thinking, and to know how to organize our work. (Nazim Bahtiri, Youth Step, Kosovo, Local consultation with victims' associations, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, September 5th 2009.)

It is necessary to create a regional fund for compensation of victims and their families.

It is not possible for a country to develop in a situation where in the aftermath of war there are so many rich people on one hand and on the other so many victims' families who cannot make ends meet. That is not good for young people to live in a society where war crimes had resulted in numerous families not being able to live normally. That is why it is very important to pressure the government and impose this as a high priority. In the meantime, we need to figure out who can help create a regional fund which would be able to establish levels, categories of victims, so to speak, and to make a just allocation of available compensation funds. (Nataša Kandić, Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia, Local consultation with victims' associations, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, September 5th 2009.)

For the families of the missing it is not important whether Serbia recognizes Kosovo's independence – it is obvious that at the time of their disappearance Kosovo was under Serbia's control – the

most important issue is to solve the issue of the missing.

It does not really matter to victims' family members if Serbia recognizes Kosovo's independence. Let's work together, let's solve the issue of the missing together (...). We know it now just as we knew it before who was to blame. Everything in Kosovo was under Serbia's control. (Xhafer Veliju, Pengu i Lirisë, Kosovo, Local consultation with victims' associations, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, September 5th 2009.)

It is necessary to create an overview of war crimes for each municipality in order to record a truthful record for future generations.

I have a proposal which is more for the family members, but also for all citizens of Vučitrn/Vustrri (...). The truth is, we are missing a historical overview of the facts of the conflict that took place in Vučitrn/Vustrri. We should have a book published for all places about the recent war, depicting all the crimes (...) because in time witnesses disappear, they die or simply leave. My children experienced this war but they are not fully aware of what was going on. They are teenagers today and they don't have a clear picture of what happened and what their families went through. If I don't tell them what I survived, they won't know anything. (Isa Latifi, Association of Political Prisoners, Kosovo, Local consultation with victims' associations, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, September 5th 2009.)

There was a massacre in Studimlje, a prison near a cemetery. There was a crime in Galica, and many others that were unregistered. There are only stories told over a drink (...). There should be a book which will contain information about all these crimes we are talking here about. A written proof, not just idle talk. (Isa Latifi, Association of Political Prisoners, Kosovo, Local consultation with victims' associations, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, September 5th 2009.)

If crimes are not reported, for example rape, we cannot establish the facts or achieve justice.

Sexual abuse – that's a weak point of the entire society which is not aware of the need to report such events. I don't know of a single victim of sexual abuse that reported the event or that somebody did it on her behalf. It is an issue of mentality, but in the meantime, while we struggle with our cultural issu-

es, rape crimes go unpunished. (Lale Grabanica Elena Gjika Association, Kosovo, Local consultation with victims' associations, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, September 5th 2009.)

In the future it is necessary to organize field trips for elementary and high school students to visit locations of larger scale crimes – that will be a good mechanism preventing recurrence.

One day I would like to see the moment that elementary and high school students or college students visit locations where crimes were committed, from Slovenia, and everywhere else where horrible crimes happened (...) and it will guarantee that things like that don't happen again. It is very important that young generations travel that road, the road of crimes committed in the recent war. (Nataša Kandić, Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia, Local consultation with victims' associations, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, September 5th 2009.)

The commission should investigate the facts about political events in Kosovo or give recommendations to create a separate body to deal with it.

I think that this commission or some other body created by the commission should deal with (...) isolation, numerous political prisoners from the period prior to 1998 (...). Information about that cannot be found in historical archives or anywhere else (...). It only exists in the narration of the people who experienced it and I am sure young people know nothing about it. (Nataša Kandić, Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia, Local consultation with victims' associations, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, September 5th 2009.)

It is necessary to investigate the case of poisoning of high school students in Vučitrn/Vustrri.

The poisoning of high school students in Vučitrn/Vustrri has never been mentioned. People had consequences, some still have problems even today and no one has ever done any research or collected any information. (Blerim Ibrahim, victim's family member, Kosovo, Local consultation with victims' associations, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, September 5th 2009.)

RECOM should also investigate fraudulent charges families paid for information about their missing family members.

RECOM could make a recommendation to form another commission to investigate, for example, claims that money was extorted from families who were trying to get information about their missing family members. (Bekim Blakaj, Humanitarian Law Center, Local consultation with victims' associations, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, September 5th 2009.)

Consultations with the local community

**Kruševac, Serbia
September 7th 2009**

The consultation with the local community in Kruševac was organized by Women's Association "Peščanik" from Kruševac (Serbia) and was attended by 47 individuals, a number of representatives of the municipal authority, representatives from several judicial institutions, academics, and representatives of schools, veterans' organizations, political parties, and representatives of various non-governmental organizations. Chief of Staff of the Rasin County was present, too. Lecturers included Maja Stojanović (Youth Initiative for Human Rights) and Dragan Popović (Humanitarian Law Center). The discussion was moderated by Sandra Farkaš (Association "Peščanik"). Regional RTV station "Kruševac" and weekly magazines "Pobeda" and "Grad" reported on the consultations.

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations of the participants

The basic question is how to secure the participation of governments in the region having in mind their differences.

Do you have any idea at all how we can convince all these governments to cooperate on this project since they cannot agree on any issues between themselves and since there are so many differences within each of these governments. We need to know this because it is a serious matter. Can you give us any predictions about how fast this can move? (Miško Radonjić, Euro Contact, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

If the initiative to create this commission obtains vocal public support from citizens in all

post-Yugoslav states, the governments will have to accept it.

If most people in all of these states demonstrate real support for such a project, and we know that our governments will not risk losing votes over such an issue, it is important that the support of the civil society is clear and loud. I think if that happens there is a real opportunity to implement this project. (Maja Stojanović, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

States in the region should adopt a joint position on the idea to create RECOM or they should mandate their respective parliaments, governments, or heads of states to do so.

Each country (...) from the territory of the former Yugoslavia has its own legal terms regulating the creation of various organizations. If the Serbian parliament adopts a law, if the Croatian government passes a by-law, and the president of Kosovo signs a decree, it is not going to be good. (Jelena Milutinović, Peščanik, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

I think that RECOM will not make sense if it is not approved or adopted at the same institutional level, i.e. at the level of each state's parliament. (Miško Radonjić, Euro Contact, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

RECOM can start functioning if mandated by all states in the region.

I think it would be very good if the regional body starts working in all states at the same time, when all prerequisites are met. If the body is mandated by Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and not from Croatia, then it should not start working until that mandate is in place. (Saša Radovanović, Institute for Serbian Culture, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

Victims who decide to testify publicly should be offered professional psychological support.

A person who was a rape victim 15 years ago and who barely managed to bury the memory of that, is expected to go through the whole ordeal again, and

I understand you will insist on the true identity of every person testifying. (...) I think, I believe it is good for society as a whole, but that would necessitate offering proper psychological support to help that women deal with her own past which will imply a very serious work on the part of each member of the commission. (Vesna Vesković, president of the City Assembly of the City of Kruševac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

Alleged perpetrators who are proven innocent in court proceedings should be entitled to financial compensation.

What happens to a person who gets identified by a victim as a perpetrator of her or his horrible ordeal from the past, and then later, in a judicial process that person is acquitted or is not processed at all? Who will then indemnify that alleged perpetrator and what happens to his or her human rights? (Vesna Vesković, president of the City Assembly of the City of Kruševac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

RECOM should have national offices and it should be located near the victims.

As for the operation of this commission, I think it should be decentralized (...) We'll have one office in each region but I also think that it should operate on a local level, to make it easier to collect information about the victims; to allow the victims to feel more at ease in an unknown environment; (...) and in order to establish the needs of a particular region more easily. (Jovana Pavlović, Peščanik, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

Historians believe that it is still too soon to establish an objective truth about the war of the 1990s, but that it is useful to understand the perception people have about these events.

I believe it is still too early to try to establish an objective truth about the events of the past, I think it is still too soon to talk about it and I also believe that there are no scientific methods to establish the truth about the events from the 1990s. More time should pass before we are able to do that. But what we can do is we can simply talk about how the people in the war-affected regions perceive these events. (...) Modern historiography tends to

study the way people experienced these events. (Jovana Pavlović, Peščanik, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

RECOM should deal with facts and it should not try to make historical or political judgments.

One of the problems we are facing is the relationship between the facts and the causes. (...) Social facts are much more complicated than exact mathematic-scientific facts which can be easily explained. Social facts cannot be reduced to a single cause, one phenomenon, etc. (...) For that reason it would really be risky for this institution to start making any historical or political judgments. (Saša Radovanović, Institute for Serbian Culture, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

I personally believe that RECOM should only deal with the facts, that it should not even (...) tackle the issue of causes, because that leads straight into politics which will definitely create additional problems. (Miško Radonjić, Euro Contact, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

RECOM should analyse the role of politicians and the media in the preparation for war.

I think that by the very creation of this commission we will finally begin the dealing with the past process in Serbia (...). In addition to politicians, I also blame the media who have been the main accomplices, instigators, or maybe even inspired some of the crimes that happened. (Dejana Jovanović, Liberal Democratic Party, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

Participants were divided regarding the issue of amnesty: some were very much against amnesty for perpetrators of war crimes while others believed that RECOM should be mandated to issue amnesty recommendations to the judiciary but that it should not be allowed to grant amnesty.

As for the question of amnesty (...) I am strongly against it (...). The commission should be able to give amnesty recommendations, at the same time not being allowed to make decisions (...). Now, that brings up the issue of the commission's

mandate and I think that is a question for the judiciary (...) and I think that amnesty can even be a recommendation is a serious legal issue, maybe even an ethical issue. (Saša Radovanović, Institute for Serbian Culture, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

I agree that amnesty should be a recommendation, but only when perpetrators are ready to cooperate (...) and willing to help in finding out the truth. (Dejana Jovanović, Liberal Democratic Party, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

I am definitely against amnesty because I believe (...) that each person must bear the consequences for their own acts regardless of whether that person is cooperating in finding mass graves locations or shedding light on some events from the past. However, history teaches us that in such cases amnesty was always granted. (Jovana Pavlović, Peščanik, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

I don't think we should discuss the issue of amnesty at all, not as a recommendation or anything else. (Miško Radonjić, Euro Contact, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

It is necessary to secure the cooperation of the international community for the creation of RECOM.

I think that this body cannot be formed without the support of the OSCE (...), without the help of the international community. (Saša Radovanović, Institute for Serbian Culture, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

For the creation of RECOM it is necessary to have a powerful campaign and secure a consensus of political parties.

When speaking about parliaments, we should have an organized campaign with the Speaker of the Parliament, heads of Parliamentary clubs, and all Parliamentary bodies in any way related to the problem we are discussing here (...). We should be able to achieve at least some political consensus. (Dejana Jovanović, Liberal Democratic Party, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

RECOM should be created as a multiethnic body. Civil society organizations should be members of RECOM in order to guarantee the objectivity and impartiality of the commission.

I would definitely like it to be a multiethnic kind of body (...) to be able to objectively establish the truth, because no matter how hard we try (...) to establish the facts, each one of us is a member of one ethnic group and we all think that we are better than the others and that we committed far less gruesome acts than the others. (Jelena Milutinović, Peščanik, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

Civil society organizations should by all means be members of the commission and they should have representatives at all levels because if that cannot guarantee the full objectivity of the work of the commission (...) it can in a way create conditions for the work of the commission to be objective. (Slavica Stanojlović, Peščanik, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

It is important to have an equal number of male and female members of RECOM.

To me, as a women's rights activist, it is also important to have an equal number of male and female RECOM members at all levels, and not only when it comes to rape and crimes we have mentioned here. (Slavica Stanojlović, Peščanik, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

RECOM should define the concept of victim and perpetrator.

I think that it is important to synchronise some other elements such as definitions, let's say, also to have synchronised definitions of victims and perpetrators, and what is considered a crime. (Slavica Stanojlović, Peščanik, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

The most important result RECOM can produce is the creation of documentation about the past.

The biggest success, if this Regional body is formed, would be the existence of a central documentation fund (...). This whole initiative would actually be a reference point (...) and (...) our ethics and value system will be built on RECOM documentation.

Maybe RECOM should have a long-term goal (...) to have tolerant people with an ability to think critically, who are able to say 'what if I was born as a little Albanian or Croatian child, what would I be thinking'? (Branimir Šoškić, Kruševac Grammar School teacher, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

It is necessary to secure the support of religious communities because their huge influence in the community can help achieve reconciliation among different ethnic communities.

It would be very important if religious communities, churches, give their support to this project, and as of yet, we still haven't received any response from them, not only regarding this project but with respect to the whole idea of reconciliation and some kind of unification of the human community. (Miško Radonjić, Euro Contact, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

RECOM should prepare recommendations about possible educational programmes for public sector employees.

In our municipal and city administrations we have people who are inadequately trained for their jobs. We understand that many people were employed in those institutions because they belonged to the governing political option and I believe that it is necessary to start a reform of government, city, and municipal administration in order to provide the best service possible to our citizens. I think that RECOM recommendations can only help achieve that goal as soon as possible. (Dejana Jovanović, Liberal Democratic Party, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kruševac, Serbia, September 7th 2009.)

National consultation with young people

**Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
September 19th 2009**

National consultation with young people was organized by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Forty 40 people, mostly non-governmental human rights organizations activists, as well as a member of Naša Stranka poli-

tical party, participated in the consultation as either participants or observers. The panellists were Mario Mažić (Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Croatia) and Marijana Toma (Impunity Watch, Serbia). Aleksandra Letić (Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republika Srpska, BiH) moderated the discussion.

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations of the participants

Young people are not responsible for crimes committed in the recent wars but they need to understand the past, to deal with it in order to be able to take responsibility for the future.

Young people (...) cannot be responsible for something their parents did (...) during the war. But (...) the young generation does bear the burden of the war events and it is really our goal to give them an opportunity (...) through the consultation process and through the dealing with the past process (...) to understand our past (...) thus taking responsibility for the future, (...) so that they would do everything to make sure such horrible crimes never happen again. (Alma Mašić, Youth Initiative for Human Rights in BiH, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

RECOM should recommend appropriate programmes of reparation for victims and society as a whole which would help people deal with the crimes that took place.

That body (...) after publishing its report makes (...) recommendations which should be implemented by the states (...). Recommendations most usually relate to reparation programmes for victims. But I would say that they could also be (...) reparation programmes for society in its entirety. So, the body makes recommendations for society to go through the transition process as easily as possible, to be able to deal with the events of the past (...) in the most efficient way in order to be able to build a healthier future. (Mario Mažić, Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Croatia, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

RECOM should be independent of political influences and be powerful enough to issue a mandatory subpoena for witnesses to testify, regardless of what state they live in.

We can form a commission here now and then invi-

te a witness to testify and he replies 'I don't want to' (...). It is really necessary that the commission is independent (...) from all possible political influences, and on the other hand, it is necessary that the commission has at its disposal instruments to make witnesses comply with invitations to appear. When the commission deems it necessary that a person should testify, the commission can automatically issue a warrant for that person to be brought before the commission to testify, and that warrant cannot be blocked by another authority within that state. (Đorđe Radanović, Center for Youth Affirmation, Šekovići, BiH, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

It is hard to connect the Kosovo conflict with the conflicts that happened in the period 1991-1995 and expect RECOM to come up with unified conclusions.

We cannot say that all that is completely connected and be expected to make unified conclusions. How are we going to make unified conclusions for three different conflicts that happened independently from each other, although in a way connected? (...) That creates a problem for a regional commission, to combine the events from the period 1991-1995 with the Kosovo conflict. (Haris Ćamil Bešliagić, Youth Initiative for Human Rights in BiH, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

There is a lot of fear and misunderstanding in local communities that can be eliminated by constantly providing information and including young people in the Coalition for RECOM.

Young people should actively participate in a coalition like this which can be achieved by providing proper information to young people. One of the ways to inform them is to share with our local communities whatever information we obtained here today and it will find its way of spreading among the young people. (Dražen Bošković, Youth Forum, Trebinje, BiH, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

There will be a lot of difficulties (...) especially in smaller communities. Trebinje is such a community. We organized a local commission. However, some people who were not properly informed attended the meeting (...) and said they would never come again to attend such consultations, that somebody would kill them after that or something like that. I think

that most people in Bosnia and Herzegovina will behave like that and most people think like that. And that should be our main task, to try to change the way they think and that can only be achieved by a constant flow of information about what RECOM represents. (Dražen Bošković, Youth Forum, Trebinje, BiH, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

RECOM must be present and supported in local communities.

If RECOM in Bosnia and Herzegovina is part of a regional concept, it must be, first of all strong on its own territory and the future members of RECOM must be trustworthy persons who know who they represent (...) and who will benefit from their decisions. So, I advocate the idea that more is done on a local level. (Dražen Bošković, Youth Forum, Trebinje, BiH, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

The debate about RECOM should be conducted in an everyday language, suitable to different ages and people who take part in them.

I completely understand the reaction of young people when we talk about reparations, transitional justice, etc. These words scare people off (...). I think we should (...) use a more understandable language instead of giving them lectures about what various things. Nobody likes that. I don't like that. Use a simple language for transitional justice (...) to be able to understand the context of these consultations and what is expected of them (...). So, it would be good (...) to adjust the language used in consultations to the age and category of the people we address during these consultations. (Jasminka-Drino Krilić, Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje Youth Center, BiH, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

These people are victims of torture and war and everything else and they will not understand this language we use here, so that it should be adjusted. Especially because of a large number of poorly educated people in these communities. (Nina Zupan, Revolt Youth Movement, Tuzla, BiH, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

It is not clear enough what the strategy of the Coalition for RECOM is and what is expected from participants of consultations.

What am I, as a young person, expected to do in this consultation process? (...). Where is this coalition going? What is its strategy? (...) What is the point of these consultations? When you receive (...) some printed material at the beginning of the consultations you don't know what to do with it. What is the strategy? (...) Does this coalition have a vision? That is very important to me. (Jasminka-Drino Krilić, Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje Youth Center, BiH, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

It is important that the debate is conducted in local communities.

It is very important to have consultations like these in local communities because this is the right way for all of us, both young and old, to say what we think about these things. (Svetlana Vuković, Luna Women's Association, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

The Initiative for RECOM will be supported by young people if presented as a challenge.

I suggest to the organizers of this process (...). It's not that the young people are not interested, they are looking for challenges. If they are not offered a proper challenge they will create a wrong one. (...) in eastern Bosnia (...) their minds are formed in a (...) uni-national, family frame (...). I worked with the children who go to the same school, same grade, different classroom, and they don't know each other. A Muslim and a Serb, they don't know each other. They don't say hi to each other (...). We will collect more than a million admission signatures and supporters if we explain thoroughly what and why is being done. (Salih Rasavac, Corridor, BiH, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

The kind of memorials to victims and perpetrators being built in BiH make a deeper division between the nations.

I know that when I go to (...) eastern Bosnia (...) this is where (...) they did it, the list of what was done and the list of who did it. I agree that a memorial should be raised. A memorial is a memorial and it should be clear why it was built and how we should treat it. However, the way we do it now (...), we just make the already existing division deeper. (Salih Rasavac, Corridor, BiH, National consultation with young

people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

RECOM has more respect for victims than for criminal prosecution.

I spent a month in training at the ICTY and I monitored the work of the Tribunal, being specifically focused on victim-witness in the process (...). That process is void of any dignity (...). This is definitely something else. It has a more human dimension (...). It fights for the rights of the victim while on the other hand it is being preventive, at least for future events. (Salih Rasavac, Corridor, BiH, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

RECOM should not analyse events from the far past.

It would be wrong to go into the very distant past, into the 1800s and so on. That would mean relativization of responsibility (...) for what (...) happened a few years ago in this region. For me, that is unacceptable and I would like to suggest (...) not to go so deep into the past, or we will go as far as the Illyrians (...) without (...) establishing the responsibility of those who committed such gruesome acts in our country. (Salih Rasavac, Corridor, BiH, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

One of the problems related to having the Parliament of BiH adopt the decision to create RECOM can be its practice of dragging things like that out for years.

It takes us ten years to adopt one law in our Parliament. At the end, it gets rejected because there is one sentence in it that's not quite to our liking (...). On the other hand, if we don't finish it during the four-year mandate of one political administration, everything fails because somebody else must deal with the same issue all over again. (Ivana Grabovac, Citizens of Tuzla Bureau, BiH, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

One of the problems in the creation of RECOM can be the fact that some states in the region do not recognize Kosovo and that some, like Slovenia, are members of the European Union.

RECOM as a (...) regional commission which should be established by an international agreement, (...)

how can we overcome the fact that Slovenia already is, (and Croatia will soon be), a member of the European Union and the problem that Kosovo is not internationally recognized and that is where human rights abuses should be investigated? (Damir Salkić, Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo office, BiH, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

Victims in BiH are not open for discussion and they don't trust persons from other ethnic communities.

I have been working for a year and a half with victims of torture and I have visited many refugee settlements and also many places where people have returned home (...). People are truly sceptical about these things (...). They are difficult to approach. They don't want to talk about what happened to them (...). My name is Nina and when I come to a place populated by Muslims, they put a wall between them and myself just because my name is Nina and my last name Zupan, (...) and I have to explain for half an hour who I am and what I am doing to be allowed to ask them some personal questions. (Nina Zupan, Revolt Youth Movement, Tuzla, BiH, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

Victims who returned home and live in mixed societies need specific psychological support and help.

They say (...) the courts are doing it, different commissions are doing it, but these people continue to carry their trauma (...). They, the victims, definitely need to be worked with. For example, all these people have children who have problems in school (...). These are now mixed communities, villages and the children attend separate schools or go to the same schools and encounter a lot of different problems. (Nina Zupan, Revolt Youth Movement, Tuzla, BiH, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

It is necessary to start lobbying and asking the government and political parties for support.

Is somebody really actively lobbying the parliaments at the moment? I think that process is very important (...) for later when it comes to adopting all these strategies and finally RECOM. (Dražen Bošković, Youth Forum, Trebinje, BiH, National

consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

I think we have to ask the government for as broad a support as possible because without them this will not be possible. (Nina Zupan, Revolt Youth Movement, Tuzla, BiH, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

Youth networks should help in collecting one million signatures.

I think that if you haven't started (...) it yet, you should start creating a network of youth organizations as soon as possible (...) because they meet weekly, at least ours does, and they can convey all of this to their members and get feedback in the near future about the number of members, their names and who could work what, so that you can be prepared for collecting signatures. (Dražen Bošković, Youth Forum, Trebinje, BiH, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

Consultations are good but a media campaign should start as soon as possible in order to secure as broad support as possible.

As much as I find these consultations 'cool' because we get together, we meet people from all over the region, we talk... I think RECOM should start a media campaign very quickly to get through to the wider public because (...) RECOM cannot achieve its goal without the support of the people. (Damir Dejanović, Revolt Youth Movement, Tuzla, BiH, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

It is necessary to double check witness statements.

I would like to know who will be working with victims in local communities. Who will be taking the statements and systemise them. Will it be partner organizations, RECOM representatives or somebody else? (...) In that context I want to bring your attention to the need to double check the stories told by victims because we are inclined to making up stories (...). We have to make sure these stories are true. (Almir Salihović, Association of Students from Srebrenica, BiH, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

The RECOM Initiative and RECOM itself are a way to prevent conflicts like these happening in the future.

While I was on my way here I had no idea that we would be discussing something like this. But now I understand that it is actually a new initiative in the Balkans which may be preventive. And that's what matters most. (Đorđe Radanović, Center for Youth Affirmation, Šekovići, BiH, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

RECOM should have offices in local communities, especially those where ethnic groups are segregated from each other as well as the communities where there is still a lot of conflict-related tension. Knowing the facts in divided communities can serve as an example to governments how to solve conflict.

I come from a nationally divided community and I attend a school known as two schools under one roof. That is why I support the local concept, a local RECOM. That is a super idea because (...) if we can solve [division] at the local level, it will be easily spread to a state level. (Avdo Zec, Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje Youth Center, BiH, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

2010 is election year in BiH and the election campaign can potentially damage the initiative and the creation of RECOM.

We talked about potential problems and those most likely to happen in the course of the creation of RECOM (...). I don't know if you realize that (...) 2010 is election year in Bosnia and Herzegovina and that that it is going to be a turbulent year. That may create problems for our cause. (Nihad Ganija, Youth Initiative for Human Rights in BiH, National consultation with young people, Sarajevo, BiH, September 19th 2009.)

Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM

**Pakrac, Croatia
September 22nd 2009**

The consultation with the local community in Pakrac was organized by the Civil Society Support and Development Center "Delfin" (Croatia) and Documenta (Croatia). The gathering was atten-

ded by 63 participants, mainly members of human rights organizations, associations and organizations of victims' families, associations of minority communities, veterans associations, as well as representatives of the local self-government and the representatives of the towns of Pakrac and Lipik. Speakers were Suzana Kunac (B.a.b.e., Croatia), Dragan Popović (Humanitarian Law Center), and Goran Božičević (Miramida Center, Croatia). Pakrački List and Radio Daruvar reported from the gathering while Mirjana Bilopavlović ("Delfin", Croatia), Vesna Teršelič (Documenta Croatia) and Dragan Popović (Humanitarian Law Center) gave interviews to the Daruvar correspondent of the Croatian TV (HRT). Professor Dr. Siniša Tatalović sent a letter of support on behalf of the Office of the President of Croatia and on the behalf of the Government of Croatia a telegram was sent by Dr. Slobodan Uzelac, Vice-Prime Minister of the Croatian Government.

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations

The Initiative for RECOM is a welcome support to the process of establishing the truth about perpetrators of war crimes and their victims, which will have a positive impact on relations between the nations and states in the region.

The work of various associations and non-governmental organizations participating in these consultations so far in Croatia and other war-torn republics of the former Yugoslavia has significantly helped speed up the process of establishing the facts about war crimes and human rights violations committed during the war. This initiative is a welcome support to further intensify and fully implement that process in order to establish the truth about war crimes perpetrators and their victims in a comprehensive and truthful way, which will beyond any doubt contribute to the creation of better relations between the nations and the states which were engulfed in the conflict. (Professor Dr. Siniša Tatalović in his letter of support, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

Everybody has their own truth but they will also have to look at other people's truth. That is the natural result of the Initiative for RECOM.

We are aware that the people living in this region have more than one truth. I support this Initiative

for RECOM because all of us who have our own truth will have to look at the truth of other people (...). Everybody wants to know the truth about their own son (...). It is praiseworthy that the Croatian soldiers protected the civilians, but no one is talking about the civilians in Klisa who were not protected (...). The truth must be known. But first (...) we should each one of us look at the truth of others. History will be based on these truths. (Miladin Jakovljević, from Pakrac, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

For me, personally, it is very important that in Croatia we open a dialogue between people who haven't talked too much until now (...) it is important that we have the need to talk to each other and that it can be done. (Goran Božičević, Miramida Center, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

We must begin by addressing who started the war and when, regardless of conflicting opinions about the causes of the war.

I really think that we need to have a sentence stating who started the war and when. I think that without it, without explaining why the armoured vehicle entered Pakrac and why a neighbour (...) took a rifle on March 1st and attacked the police station (...). In Croatian Pakrac we will not be able to say "that's it and we are now ready to move on" ... I am a Catholic and I am ready to forgive if a hand is offered to me (...) and I don't like it when people say that Belgrade started it. We can say whatever we want if there are facts behind it confirming what exactly happened. (Dubravka Špančić from Pakrac, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

I think we need to include the causes of the war in any case, because today we are talking exclusively about the consequences which we have because of some causes. (...) Although I am sure we have different opinions about the causes of this war. (Branko Kovačić, the Council of the Serbian National Minority of the town of Daruvar, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

We should name war crimes perpetrators and those who ordered them to commit crimes instead of blaming entire nations for their acts.

When we talk about a crime, then, if you ask me, we should always use first and last name of persons responsible for that crime and those who instructed them to act in such a manner. (Jaroslav Vozab, the Council of the Czech National Minority of the Pože-ga-Slavonija County, town of Lipik, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

I was held a prisoner in the detention camp in Bučije, but before the camp in Bučije, there was a detention camp in Grdevica (...). I was held there as a Serb because I refused to be drafted (...) and it hurts me as a person, wherever I go they say "you Serbs did that" and I tell them: "Well, I didn't". There are so many people in my village, a hundred houses, and I cannot guarantee it with my life that they are innocent of any crimes (...) but we need to tell the names of those of who are. (Veljko Mandić, Association of Anti-fascist fighters and Anti-fascists, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

RECOM will investigate crimes which have not been processed so far.

We have our people from Pakrac who were taken from Kostajnica to Manjača, Bijeljina, people from Vukovar imprisoned in Sremska Mitrovica, I never heard that any of the people involved (...) had been processed (...) I know that the commission will answer these questions and that really makes me happy. (Dubravka Špančić from Pakrac, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

We have (...) in the region of Daruvar and Pakrac and other neighbouring municipalities a lot of missing civilians of Serbian nationality, also, who went missing during the war and even after the war. I am sure that there are people who know where they are, who took them, and where they are and I do believe that this commission and this initiative will help find the truth about them. (Branko Kovačić, the Council of the Serbian National Minority of the town of Daruvar, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

The Initiative for RECOM encourages gatherings of the citizens of Pakrac of all nationalities to openly talk about different topics, which can help normalize relations between them.

I think that this gathering (...) which has brought together individuals of various orientations (...) who were (...) on opposing sides during the conflict (...) gives us some perspective and a future for this town (...). It encourages them to work on normalizing relations here, to inspire them to start telling the truth. (Obrad Ivanović, Serbian Democratic Forum, Pakrac, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

It is necessary to initiate talks in the local communities about who started the war.

I think that your initiative is very good but we, as the citizens of Pakrac, should have such a commission here (...) to conclude once for all who started the war. (Antun Bruneta, the Council of the Italian National Minority, Pakrac, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

The creation of an official and objective historical record of the past as well as the recognition of victims is a huge task.

The creation of an official, objective, and accurate record of war crimes and other serious violations of human rights committed in the period since the beginning of 1991 till the end of 2001, the recognition of victims and their suffering, as well as the prevention of the repetition of such crimes, as you listed as RECOM goals, is truly a huge task. (Slobodan Uzelac, Vice-President of the Government of Croatia, letter of support to the Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

How to be secure that the parliaments select responsible, experienced, and educated members of RECOM without a political pressure?

I am a little confused by the fact that the parliaments are going to form these commissions. The democracy in our countries is still at such a low level to be able to avoid political pressure and be able to select people who have no connection with political circles. (...) how do you think you can avoid politics? How do you think you can make sure that the parliaments only choose people according to their professional and ethical credentials (...)? That is not quite clear to me. (Dubravka Špančić from Pakrac, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

RECOM opens a space for war crimes perpetrators to be abolished.

You have just opened an ideal polygon for the perpetrators to speak, and maybe even be abolished. (Dubravka Špančić from Pakrac, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

Participants from Croatia want to know how the societies in Serbia, Montenegro, and BiH treat their war veterans who participated in the war in Croatia: are they treated as heroes?

We have our judiciary and our law on the homeland defenders in place ... I don't know the laws in Serbia. Does Serbia consider the people who opened fire at us to be their veterans and homeland defenders? Do Montenegro and Bosnia have that? Who are the defenders and heroes of the countries we are going to cooperate with in RECOM? (Dubravka Špančić from Pakrac, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

It is necessary to define who can be considered a victim. Victims are also children who were denied a peaceful childhood.

We need to define a victim. You mentioned women, you mentioned rape, which is by the way not recognized by the Croatian judiciary, and which we feel very strongly about, victims are even my children who live in a town like this, who are deprived of all the things I was able to enjoy as a child 30 years ago. Victims are also women who dragged their children around other people's houses while their husbands were in the middle of the war zone. (...) we are all traumatized, all of us... (Dubravka Špančić from Pakrac, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

Victims must never be considered the same as the aggressor.

Maybe I have strong emotional ties, but (...) and when I entered the International Reconciliation Council and here in the county, I never said that the victims should be made equal as the aggressor. That is the first and foremost thing that must be understood. (Jaroslav Vozab, the Council of the Czech National Minority of the Požega-Slavonija County, town of Lipik, Croatia, Consultation with the local

community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

All states must accept extradition requests and they must all sentence perpetrators.

All countries must first of all recognize one basic law – the extradition law and they must all abide by the rulings of the International Court of Justice. Also, they must all have laws in place allowing them to punish perpetrators of war crimes. (Jaroslav Vozab, the Council of the Czech National Minority of the Požega-Slavonija County, town of Lipik, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

It is important to make a list of all detention camps and properly mark them.

I was imprisoned at the Bučje detention camp but before that camp there was a detention camp in Grđevica (...) and no one knew about it, nobody from the government knew about it, only the criminals who locked us up there (...). A secret detention camp that nobody except the party members knew about. The “great Serbs” as I would call them or the “non-Serbs” (...) we should mark it properly. (Veljko Mandić, Association of Anti-fascist fighters and Anti-fascists, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

All victims must be identified by name and all crimes must be listed and solved. There are still many crimes nobody is talking about.

There is village in our neck of the woods called Gornji Grahovljani. Twelve people went missing from that village. No one has ever asked about them, not the Serbs and not the Croats, and that should definitely be included in the list of crimes to be solved. (Veljko Mandić, Association of Anti-fascist fighters and Anti-fascists, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

No government representative can say that they don't know about the 14 missing persons from the village of Gornji Grahovljani. It is not 12, it is 14. Ms. Teršelič, here is the list. I don't have all the data, but I will not allow anyone to tell me that they don't know anything about the people who stayed behind in the Pakračka Poljana and who are now gone.

(Đorđe Gunjević, former prisoner of the detention camps Bučje and Pakračka Poljana, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

RECOM should make a list of victims of the NATO bombardment.

I am curious to know whether RECOM (...) will make a list of all victims who lost their lives or their loved ones as a result of the NATO bombing campaign, since RECOM is going to be operating on the territory of the entire former Yugoslavia. (Branko Kovačić, the Council of the Serbian National Minority of the town of Daruvar, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

Victims, especially the children of parents who lost their lives or went missing should be entitled to compensation.

Is it possible to provide (...) some sort of compensation for the victims by the government (...) precisely because we have many children who have lost their parents because they were taken away and killed? (Marija Žilić, Social Support Center of the Town of Pakrac, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

For the people throughout the region it is very difficult to deal with the fact that a member of their own ethnic group committed a crime. There is no political will in the region to help people deal with the truth.

Each of our respective governments has its legal instruments and possibilities, if they so wish, to help with the dealing with the truth issues. It is very difficult for the people to accept the fact that a member of their own ethnic community has committed a crime and the lack of political will to help with this issue is obvious. (Đorđe Gunjević, former prisoner of the detention camps Bučje and Pakračka Poljana, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

Participants of the consultation are in favour of establishing the facts about the victims, perpetrators, and those who issued orders to commit crimes.

It is necessary to establish the facts and finally come

up with the names of perpetrators and those who ordered them to commit crimes (...). We should not delay this because in reality 50% of us who were in the Bučje detention camp are already dead (...) there were people age 18, 20 to 83 years of age there (...). For that reason I salute this initiative and its intention to establish the facts. (Vladimir Solar, former prisoner of the detention camps Bučje and Stara Gradiška, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

Institutions and governments have the necessary information about the crimes. They should be dealing with such issues and I do not see a place for RECOM!

The police have the knowledge about many things on both sides. It should be said openly. We have to support the governments and various state institutions in doing their job and I honestly believe that such gatherings cannot help a whole lot. We can say whatever we want here. (Milutin Cicvara, former member of the City Council of the town of Pakrac, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

There are archived video recordings of crimes and RECOM should have access to these files.

There are many archived video recordings of crimes committed on both sides. This commission should probably insist on these recordings. The fact is some victims, such as those in Kukunjevac, were recorded, according to government sources on the other hand (...). There is also a recording of the destruction of a church in Čaglić, in Lipik, and so on. (Jaroslav Vozab, the Council of the Czech National Minority of the Požega-Slavonija County, town of Lipik, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

Many facts will never be revealed but RECOM should be able to narrow the space for lies and manipulation.

There is a sentence that comes to my mind, something a friend of mine from Northern Ireland said once (...): "Our goal is (...) to narrow the space for lies and manipulations." And there are many truths (...) that we will never know, but the more we close that space where people can talk about the things

that happened to this or that number of people, the less opportunity there is for these things to be heard. (Goran Božičević, Miramida, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

Public hearings of victims are very important.

I heard some horrifying stories here. Sometimes I hear them in my office, too, and therefore I think that these people should testify (...). A woman came to see me (...). I think she had a stroke or something like that (...) and she said that both her husband and her son had gone missing during the war (...). I think that it is very important to hear the testimonies like the ones we heard today about the suffering these women were exposed to. (Mirica Miljanić, Serbian Democratic Forum, Pakrac, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

State commissions for former inmates of detention camp and missing persons should support the creation of RECOM.

There are also state bodies in the Republic of Croatia, such as the commission for former inmates and missing persons, and I am sure other states in the region have them, too. So, they should be able to give this commission the kind of support it needs to be able to compile a legally valid document. (Mirica Miljanić, Serbian Democratic Forum, Pakrac, Croatia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Pakrac, Croatia, September 22nd 2009.)

National consultation with intellectuals

**Novi Sad, Serbia
September 25th 2009**

The national consultation with intellectuals was organized by the Independent Association of Journalists of Vojvodina (NDNV, Serbia). Thirty-five individuals, university professors, scientists from various institutes and museums, representatives of non-governmental organizations and media participated in the consultation. Speakers were Bogdan Ivanišević from the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) and Dragan Popović from the Humanitarian Law Center (HLC).

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations of participants

State organs of the Republic of Serbia have done very little to identify war crimes perpetrators from the police and military and to establish the role of church, schools, academic, and scientific institutions.

We have state organs that were forced, first of all thanks to the actions of the Humanitarian Law Center and the media, to do something, but they have done very little to identify crimes committed by members of the police or the military, or to discover crimes originating from church, in revealing the role of schools (...) and the highest country's academic and scientific institutions. (Slobodan Beljanski, lawyer, Novi Sad, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

Serbia's Orthodox Church (SPC) will not allow access to its documents nor will it support the creation of RECOM.

A representative of the church should be a member of RECOM or its bodies, or more precisely from different churches (...). It has acquired a certain authority all over the world (...) but in our community it is going to be very difficult (...) or almost impossible, (...). Will the SPC and other churches allow access to its documents? (...) I can hardly imagine that happening. (...) And thirdly, Filaret, the current bishop of Mileševo, with weapons in his hand, sitting on a tank; the documents are here, but the church did not process that case even though, according to the SPC canonical laws, it was obliged to investigate it and deprive him of his church rank. (Mirko Đorđević, publisher, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

What church, they are not going to talk about anything (...) no chance Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro will be thrilled about the creation of RECOM. Church will not read any counter-memorandums. (Mirko Đorđević, publisher, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

The fact that Serbia does not have good relations with its neighbours complicates the entire process. RECOM cannot be created without significant support of the international community.

Cooperation of Serbia with its new neighbours (...) is not good (...). There is no dialogue and there are no noticeable steps forward (...). That is one of the things to be anticipated as a possible aggravating circumstance (...). This kind of initiative cannot be successful with strong international support. (Milan Simurdić, former diplomat, Novi Sad, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

RECOM should be granted the status of a party in war crime trial proceedings and be authorized to initiate proceedings.

We now conduct war crimes trials given to us (...) for some less significant war crimes (...). But this commission with all the knowledge (...) that it will acquire should be included in war crimes trials, or act as an interested party in the process (...). Why couldn't it be legitimate to actively initiate legal proceedings and be given the status of a party in the process? (Dragana Ćorić, University of Novi Sad, Law School, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

It is necessary to investigate the role of the media because many of those accused of war crimes claim that they went to war after being motivated by media reports of the suffering of the Serbian people.

"But I heard it, I saw it in the paper, then I took my gun" (...) "and went to that town" (...). There are quite a few cases right now where the accused simply stated it as a fact. They claim they were motivated by a story they heard or saw which prompted their acts (...). I remember one example in particular (...) about 43 Serbian babies being killed by the Croats in Vukovar; Reuters was the first to publish it, then RTS, and then the Vukovar daily paper (...). (Branislava Kostić, School of Technical Science at the University of Novi Sad, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

RECOM should determine the target groups it will address and adjust its approach accordingly: it should be up to the standards of these groups, to be easily recognizable by them so that they do not perceive them as something being imposed upon them.

It is necessary to determine target groups. For example, two groups only (...) one group being victims of

these conflicts (...) in which case we should adopt a psychotherapeutic function, i.e. enable the victims to tell others about their suffering in their own words (...). If the target group is the society from which war crimes perpetrators originated, it is important for future efficiency of the work of the commission to adopt a language reflecting the value system inherent to that group. (Pavle Rak, publisher, Slovenia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

Some of RECOM members should be representatives of institutions responsible for the conflicts, such as churches, national science academies of arts and science, etc. These institutions do not incorporate in their value systems anything that directly contradicts those adopted by RECOM [peaceful co-existence with others, repentance, forgiveness] and it would be their task to investigate why these institutions broke their own values.

I am very interested in something like that – to include representatives of all churches or other institutions which are rather responsible for these conflicts, such as academies of arts and science, (...) in the work of the commission. I think we should insist on having some of their members work with us and, while still nourishing the values adopted by their institutions, help us make the final product of our work acceptable from the point of view of many different groups. (Pavle Rak, publisher, Slovenia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

RECOM should collect data and documentation instead of interpreting facts.

I have no dilemma when it comes to whether it is necessary to create a commission like this, but I think it should collect information and let someone else interpret them. (Pavel Domonji, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

I suggest we focus on the events and documents and not put unattainable goals before ourselves (...) because we may be easily trapped. (Hajrija Mujović-Zornić, Institute of Social Sciences, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

One commission (...) cannot be so well staffed to be

able to both research and interpret the facts (...). Interpretation of the established facts simply does not fit this concept somehow (...). If we want it to be a research body, it should not do any interpretation. (Dragana Ćorić, University of Novi Sad, Law School, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

Establishing and interpreting facts are two inseparable activities.

Establishing and interpreting facts (...), regardless of how we are in theory (...) inclined to make a distinction between them (...) we should bear in mind that the two are inseparable. We cannot exclude interpretation of the facts from the work of the commission and allow it only to collect the facts because it has to offer its value judgements and we need to be aware of them. We also have to be aware of the fact that there are not only factual judgements that can be proved by facts and evidence and in that regard we have to try to prove them without attributing any value elements to them. (Jasminka Hasanbegović, Law School, University of Belgrade, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

Serbs no longer respond passionately to stories about Serbian victims and it will be difficult to evoke compassion for victims from other ethnic communities.

Ideologies lose their influence as the time passes, especially when they become para-state ideologies and then a cultural phenomenon occurs – the public becomes more or less not interested for its contents (...). When you talk about Serbian victims of the recent conflicts with their Serbian fellow countrymen, they no longer respond with passion (...) I was even once told “that’s boring” (...) and that is going to make any conversation about other ethnic group’s victims harder. (Đokica Jovanović, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

For as long as we perceive our victims and our war criminals in a manner different from the way we look at other group’s victims and war criminals, RECOM’s efforts will be fruitless.

We use different standards to judge criminals in our own midst and (...) victims from our own ethnic group and that is pretty much the same in all soci-

eties in the region, which is a major obstacle for this commission to have certain results. (Vladislav Radaković, political analyst, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

Not a single official apology made so far has been sincere.

There have been no sincere apologies. Although our president apologized for these crimes, they have not been felt to be sincere. (Vladislav Radaković, political analyst, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

The dealing with the past process has yielded moderate results in most countries. It will not be possible in Serbia, just as it was not possible in Spain or Austria. Germany is the exception.

The dealing with the past process yielded moderate results in most countries (...) on a social level (...). Germany is an exception and is not a good example (...). In Spain after the fall of Franco (...) a social consensus was reached; Franco was down, democracy was back, but they decided not to analyse what happened under his regime (...). It is interesting to know that for as long as Spain used the peseta as official currency, lots of pesetas with Franco's image were in circulation (...). Not even to mention Austria (...) with Kurt Waldheim being the most obvious example (...) being president of Austria (...) and becoming Secretary General of the United Nations after being found responsible for committing war crimes. (Slobodan Marković, Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

When thinking about the academic level, I am an optimist; I believe (...) that (...) an academic debate on dealing with the past is being opened (...), but without the participation of the majority (...) to do anything significant in Serbia. That is really not possible and is exactly the reason why it was not possible in Spain or Austria. (Slobodan Marković, Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

All states are interested in hiding their responsibility. They will not allow access to state archives and without it RECOM will only be able to give a general assessment.

We can form 50 commissions, but if governments in the region do not give us access to official documents, we will only be able to give a general assessment (...). I'm a member of the commission tasked with determining the facts about the execution of General Draža Mihajlović (...) and I can tell you that even when the government is ready to cooperate, and it obviously does since the commission was formed by the government, I am still not 100% sure that the commission was allowed access to the entire archive (...). We are here discussing the events (...) that took place 65 years ago, where (...) there are no politically relevant survivors to testify (...). This initiative for RECOM – we are talking about something happened 10 or 15 years ago and almost all protagonists are still alive and everyone is interested (...) to discover the facts. (Slobodan Marković, Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

RECOM can help renew confidence between ethnic communities involved in conflict.

There is another way of looking at the idea to form this commission for establishing the facts about the crimes committed during recent wars (...). If it is really formed, it can help improve relationship between ethnic communities involved in the conflict and help renew confidence between them. (Vladimir Pavićević, Ph candidate, Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

It is necessary to start pressuring political elites in the region as soon as possible and academic communities in the region can help.

We should not wait until December 1st or December 10th 2010 in order to start exerting pressure on political elites (...) and I think that in addition to the non-governmental sector, academic communities should also conduct consultations and contact relevant political figures in all countries in the region (...) in order to secure the support of specific political groups and be ready for December 10th. (Vladimir Pavićević, PhD candidate, Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

I think that everything that has been done so far is very successful and that now is the time to start con-

tacting the government, the parliament, state institutions (...) and start that kind of lobbying. (Dragana Ćorić, University of Novi Sad, Law School, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

RECOM should understand that many people consider the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia and the crimes committed in the aftermath, represent the continuation of the second world war.

These crimes are inseparable from those committed during the second world war or after it (...). The hatred, the desire for revenge, even the belief that (...) a war crime can go unpunished, all that is a consequence of that period and those crimes. (Balint Ištvan, publisher, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

It does not mean that this commission should research (...) war crimes committed during the second world war; that's not what it is mandated to do. But personally, as a sociologist, I still hold valid arguments to claim that (...) the conflict on the territory of the former Yugoslavia is a continuation (...) of the second world war; at least, in the consciousness of the people. (Lazar Žolt, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

The goal of RECOM should be the prevention of recurrence of such crimes.

It is clear that we will not have every crime punished. But, more importantly, we need to make sure that they don't happen again, not in 45 and not in 200 years (...) and that would be our main success. I think that in view of that, the Coalition should have its strategy. (Balint Ištvan, publisher, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

Expectations should be realistic, in compliance with social conditions, and international circumstances.

If one is aware of the limitations of a social action, it does not mean that the action should be dropped – on the contrary, it simply means that expectations should be set accordingly, having in mind all circumstances surrounding it and influencing it.

(Slobodan Marković, Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

If the Coalition for RECOM cannot persuade any high-ranking church officials, a bishop or a theology expert, to take part in the process, it will present a serious impediment to the entire project.

If you are not capable of engaging those liberal elements that exist everywhere in the society (...) to take part in the work of the Coalition, if we can't find a single bishop or an eminent theology expert to join us, then it will seriously limit the scope of our social activity (...). If you look at the poll results published by Strategic Marketing Research Agency, you will realize that 5% of citizens strongly support the work of the non-governmental sector. (Slobodan Marković, Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

It is not a problem to collect one million signatures, but that is not enough to change public opinion. The campaign should start as soon as possible.

One million signatures may seem a lot, but I think that for an idea like this it will not be a problem to collect them (...). But, I am not sure how important that is. That is a million signatures in the entire region and I have no idea if that will be enough to influence a change in public opinion (...). This campaign should start as soon as possible (...) and it should be bold, regardless of the fact that most people are still not inclined to think like that. (Jasminka Hasanbegović, Law School, University of Belgrade, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

It is necessary to synchronize activities of all those taking part in preparations for the creation of the commission and be aware of specific characteristics of each state.

In order to be able to maintain the regional concept, it is necessary to synchronize activities of all those working on preparations for the creation of the commission. So, apply proper synchronization of actions and conclusions, along with consideration for particularities of each of the states to be included in the work of this commission. (Živojin Tasić, National

Museum of Leskovac, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

The truth told by victims can be used in war crimes trials and scientific research and for victims it has a therapeutic effect and it should serve to cleanse war-torn societies from evil.

The truth told by victims can be used in court proceedings and in scientific research, but most importantly, it is beneficial for victims (...) in terms of being therapeutic (...). It is true also that this truth (...) can cleanse the war-torn societies from evil (...) which procreated all this evil that affected mainly those who became victims. (Živojin Tasić, National Museum of Leskovac, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

RECOM will help initiate investigation of crimes which are still unknown.

RECOM will not be able to process, but it will be able to create an atmosphere and (...) collect arguments which will enable them to require changes in warfare laws in terms of processing some things which have been outside our legal system so far. (Lazar Žolt, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

RECOM should also establish the facts about the events that took place at the time of the conflict in Slovenia and in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Since all of it is about the wars that started in Slovenia (...) and there was also a war on the territory of Macedonia, I think these two states should also be included. In any case, their problems are not as overwhelming and it will be easier to conduct investigations. We should not leave anything un-investigated if there is a significant connection with the events in other regions. (Pavle Rak, publisher, Slovenia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

It is necessary to clarify the role of the international community in the conflict.

The international community took a very active part in this war and there were victims which can create bad blood between the people (...). I think it is

not entirely useless. (Pavle Rak, publisher, Slovenia, National consultation with intellectuals, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 25th 2009.)

Regional consultation with journalists

**Novi Sad, Serbia,
September 26th 2009**

The regional consultation with journalists was organized by the Independent Association of Journalists of Vojvodina (NDNV, Serbia). Forty-seven people, founders, directors, editors-in-chief, editors, and journalists from the region, participated in the consultation. Panellists were Bogdan Ivanišević from the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), Nataša Kandić from the Humanitarian Law Center (HLC) Serbia, and Vesna Teršelič (Documenta, Croatia). The discussion was moderated by (Dinko Gruhonjić (NDNV, Serbia), Eugen Jakovčić (Documenta, Croatia) and Aleksandar Trifunović (Buka, BiH). News agency SRNA (BiH), TV B92, and Radio Pančevo reported on the consultation.

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations of participants

The Initiative for RECOM has opened up a space for discussion about the past in the entire region and created a coalition powerful enough to request the creation of RECOM.

There is a possibility that maybe one of the states involved in the process, for example, will say “no, we don’t want it”. But the result of this regional debate is the fact that we have created a space for a discussion about the past. No one will ever be able to say “no more discussion about it”. The Coalition for RECOM is such a powerful force that it will never let any government be at ease or refuse any requests from the Coalition, and that is the creation of a regional commission which would be tasked with establishing the facts about war crimes. (Nataša Kandić, Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

Collecting one million of signatures for RECOM does not guarantee that the governments of the countries in the region will accept the Initiative for RECOM.

As for this idea, I don't doubt the fact that we will collect one million signatures but I think that later, once they are collected, if the governments of the countries in the region (...) refuse to accept the initiative to create RECOM (...) then I'm afraid that we will have a hard time doing it. (Luka Brailo, Novi List, Croatia, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

In addition to political will, it is necessary to secure the support of owners and editors-in-chief who can help handle the initiative properly.

I believe that after this conference we must sit down with owners and editors-in-chief of media outlets throughout the region because without their support and the famous political will, all these good ideas concerning the creation of RECOM will be wasted. (Luka Brailo, Novi List, Croatia, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

A media group that (...) would be tasked with coordinating the relations of the Coalition for RECOM and the public and other media should organize discussions with the different media profiles and determine how they should all report to the public about RECOM. (Zoran Ilić, FENA, BiH, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

In order to reach an agreement to report regularly about the RECOM initiative it is necessary to organize meetings with public TV stations and owners of all media outlets. It is necessary that each media outlet assign a journalist for this task.

I have (...) so to speak a strategy proposition for initiators and members of the Coalition for RECOM – a meeting should be as soon as possible organized with directors and owners of media outlets, decision makers. (Aleksandar Reljić, TV Pink, Serbia, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

We need you as media people to help us choose what journalists or editors we should invite to our gatherings. We always pay trip expenses for those attending our consultations. (Aleksandar Trifunović, Buka, BiH, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

It is necessary to investigate the role of the media before and during the conflicts.

My colleague (...) mentioned a very important thesis (...) in addition to investigating the role of the media during the 1990s, it is also important to establish their role for the period before the 1990s when the orchestration of the events that followed actually began. (Željko Hodonj, HINA, Croatia, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

Not only that the media prepared the scene for the conflict, they also often added fuel to it by promoting hatred, fear, etc. (Branislava Obranović, Independent Society of Journalists of Vojvodina, Serbia, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

An unclear stance on war crimes along with unrealistic expectations of RECOM initiators that the same governments which are still denying crimes can become partners in this project are the main obstacles we have in BiH.

This project is burdened with a lot of problems, we have governments denying war crimes, especially in BiH, and yet, we are trying to include these governments in this project by making them our partners. I think that, more or less, that mission is impossible. (Senad Pećanin, Dani, BiH, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

Just knowing the facts about war crimes is not enough without knowing the cause and the context, but in the case of the former Yugoslavia that would mean going back deep into the past, as far as the 14th century.

The next big problem (...) is whether this commission should only deal with facts or should it analyse causes, too. If we only present the facts (...) that is an easier process regardless of whether the truth is being told by a victim or a perpetrator (...) but we cannot grasp the meaning of these facts without analysing these events (...). However, if we choose to explore the cause or the context, I'm afraid we will go as far as into the past as the 14th century. Also, I don't really see any societal groups which would like our history to be factually connected. (Senad Pećanin, Dani, BiH, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

Naturally, each story has its own context, but I think we should, at least in the beginning, stick to the facts only. (Sanda Savić, RTV B92, Serbia, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

For the media, it is very difficult to report from something which is a process rather than an event. Another aggravating circumstance is the fact that there are fewer donors for media outlets reporting about war crimes.

It is very difficult for the media to report from 'a process' in a way similar to that when reporting from an event. What is important to stress is the resources media outlets have at their disposal. There are fewer donors for those reporting about war crimes. These donors are gone and an excellent media outlet such as Feral Tribune had to be closed because of the lack of sensitivity on the part of the donors to understand the importance of its work. (Senad Pećanin, Dani, BiH, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

There are still some journalists who had their role in preparing the war working in some media outlets. Should we have cooperation with these media and would it be possible?

Can we cooperate with media outlets still employing journalists who participated in the war propaganda (...)? How are they going to make a report of a story which was made on the basis of collected facts? (Branislava Obranova, Independent Society of Journalists of Vojvodina, Serbia, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

The idea to form RECOM is good, but in the current media, cultural, and political atmosphere it is not possible to implement it.

I think it's a fine idea but in our current political and cultural situation, and the atmosphere in the media, I don't see how it is going to be possible to implement it. (Senad Pećanin, Dani, BiH, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

The main value of RECOM must be truth, the peace of victims' families, and reconciliation between ethnic communities. In implementing its goals RECOM must consider amnesty and protected witnesses.

I'd say that the main value of RECOM must be truth. For RECOM it should be more important how many families will find out the truth than how many criminals will end up in jail. So, immunity in exchange for the truth (...) in order to secure the peace for victims' families who will find out the truth about their loved ones and give them a proper burial if possible. So, in view of that, RECOM must consider amnesty and protected witnesses (...). The main value of RECOM must be truth, the peace of victims' families, and reconciliation between ethnic communities. (Željko Tvrdišić, Association of Journalists of Kosovo and Metohija, Kosovo, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

States in the region which do not recognize the facts established by the ICTY will have a hard time accepting the initiative to create RECOM.

So, it is indisputable that the ICTY established the facts about all sides in the conflict, but politicians do not recognize them and that's why I think it is going to be difficult to convince the governments to accept this project. (Damir Šimić, TV BH1, BiH, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

We should start with the facts established by the ICTY and national war crimes trial chambers – no one will stand against it.

I think that in the beginning we should only stick to the facts because we have ICTY judgements and decisions of domestic courts and I think that we should use these legally binding judgements handed down by independent judges and nobody will be against them. And that should be spread further. (Dženana Karup-Druško, Dani, BiH, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

In BiH the figure of 200 000 killed Bosniaks is still being manipulated, although the Research and Documentation Center established that there were approximately 97,000 killed and missing.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina we had a promotion of a political leader, a media magnate (...) a few days ago, who is known to have manipulated (...) the fact about the total number of killed and missing in BiH and he mentioned the figure of 200,000 killed Bosniaks again despite the fact that the Research and Documentation Center established a figure of

approximately 97,000 victims in BiH. (Damir Šimić, TV BH1, BiH, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

Croatian media reporting war crimes trials of Croatian generals are obviously biased and favour the defendants.

It is a very difficult position for you that ask for the support of the media. I am quite familiar with the Croatian media (...) and I can tell you (...) that they report on the war crime trials of Croatian generals with an obvious favouritism towards the defendants. (Damir Šimić, TV BH1, BiH, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

Regardless of whether RECOM will establish the facts and help future generations what happened, it will not prevent manipulation with facts and figures.

If this project succeeds in its intention and establish the truth, its long-term goal of leaving something for the future generations, will not prevent the practice of manipulating with the facts. (Damir Šimić, TV BH1, BiH, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

In Kosovo we have a problem with identification of mortal remains which is why it is necessary to start with the national/state level and then connect on a regional level.

We have one problem in Kosovo, we buried 2,000 people without DNA analyses while at the morgue in Priština (...) there are over 400 mortal remains whose DNA does not match the analyses provided by family members. We have a problem within the country (...) and I think it is far better to start from a national level and later meet on a regional level. (Ardijana Fači, Koha Vision, Kosovo, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

Facts are not sufficient. It is necessary to present war crimes within a context which is something the governments in the region will not accept.

I am a pessimist when it comes to that because we know where money and power come from and these people (politicians) they don't like the truth. In Montenegro, three or four years ago (...) a documentary was made (...) about the attack on Dubrovnik. The

film was full of facts (...) but the political dimension of the entire story was ostensibly missing. The film showed bearded, drunk men, attacking the world's cultural heritage driven by some cosmic energy etc. I am exaggerating it, of course, but I want to say that the context must be given. (Brano Mandić, Vijesti, Montenegro, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

The media campaign must be serious and it should be under the leadership of truly dedicated persons.

Your media campaign should be very serious (...) I suggest you form a team for that (...). It should be done by dedicated people; (...) those with enough power; (...) strong individuals. It should be handled by those who take their work home. (Brano Mandić, Vijesti, Montenegro, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

RECOM should raise awareness and create an alternate approach to people since what matters most is to raise awareness and deal with the past. (Idriz Seferi, Koha Ditore, Kosovo, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

RECOM is important in order to open up discussion about Albanian victims in Serbia and about Serbian victims in Kosovo.

RECOM is important for the future of each and every one of us, so we should work on it and support it (...). Many people here don't know that approximately 10,000 people were killed, in Kosovo they are afraid that only Serbian victims are going to be mentioned and so on, while here (in Serbia) we only talk about Serbian victims. Idriz Seferi, Koha Ditore, Kosovo, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

Throughout the region we hear media reports about their "own" victims.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina since the beginning of the war, and also in Kosovo since 1999 (...) we have a system to tell just one part of a story, a story that is acceptable by one side only (...). We should stop doing that – talking only about our own victims. For example, when reporting from war crimes trials, if a Serb is being prosecuted, they only report about what is contained in the indictment completely ignoring what the defence is saying and the other

way round if a Bosniak is being tried, they just report about what the defence said and ignore everything that's in the indictment. (Sanja Škuletić, Avaz, BiH, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

Media outlets will begin reporting about the activities of the Coalition for RECOM if consultations become a political event.

We will report about your activities if you really make a political breakthrough, if you become a political event (...). You really have to try to do it, intentionally or unintentionally, like the people who wanted to organize the gay pride parade, they became a main political story in the country. (Sanda Savić, RTV B92, Serbia, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

As soon as it is created, the commission will be challenged by an anti-campaign.

As soon as the news becomes public that the commission was created, I can see a thousand headlines against it and we can all predict who will be behind it and what will follow. (Vesna Sladojević, RTS, Serbia, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

The most valuable result of RECOM's work will be the opportunity young people and future generations will have to know everything that happened in the recent wars and it will come as a firsthand experience told by people from all over former Yugoslavia.

RECOM is important for future generations (...) I want my child one day (...) to be able to know exactly what happened in the country where her parents lived, to learn the facts as close to the truth as possible and it will be best if it is through the stories told by the people who experienced it and took part in it. That's the biggest value of this project. (Vesna Sladojević, RTS, Serbia, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

It will be difficult for RECOM to obtain data and documentation owned by state organs.

If we ask institutions to give us these documents and the data they have so that we can find the facts easier, that is not going to happen, they will only give them when they are ready. Unfortunately, we witness

that every day in war crimes trials. (Vesna Sladojević, RTS, Serbia, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

Info Programs of the Serbian Broadcasting Corporation (RTS) will report from consultations but the quality of their work will depend on the personal interest of the reporter. Victims' testimonies should be aired as special broadcasts for a better impression and as such they attract more viewers.

RTS will always report from your consultations, but the quality of the report will depend on the reporter's personal interest in the topic. (Vesna Sladojević, RTS, Serbia, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

These broadcasts should be aired in separate time slots and not together with daily news. Victims' testimonies are always more attractive to viewers when done by individual authors. (Vesna Sladojević, RTS, Serbia, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

Have you thought about a possible association or a network support of the media for the Coalition for RECOM? Maybe you can sign a contract with some media outlets to report from your consultations and make special shows about it? (Rajko Šerbet, Montenegro TV, Montenegro, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

RECOM has to define the concept of 'victim' and that definition must be used in all countries or the entire idea will be compromised.

RECOM must come up with a clear definition of who can be considered 'victim' and apply it steadfastly (...) in order to avoid standard compromising situations such as discussion about "our" and "their" victims. (Zoran Sekulić, FONET, Serbia, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

Victims are victims, there are not "our" and "their" victims and they must be treated in an identical manner. That approach will guarantee credibility, authenticity, and truthfulness to the entire initiative.

Not all criminals are the same, but all victims are always the same and there are not our and their

victims and if the whole point of this commission is make the voice of victims be heard, then they have to be treated in an identical manner (...) We, as media outlets, and you as the Coalition for RECOM can win the hearts of the public if what we do is perceived as credible, authentic, and truthful from the beginning to the very end. (Zoran Sekulić, FONET, Serbia, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

The initiative for RECOM has the public turned against it, the same public that advocates punishment of all perpetrators always convinced that the perpetrators come from other ethnic groups.

Polls show that 80% of the people from my neck of the woods, Banja Luka, believe that all war crimes perpetrators should be brought to justice but in the same polls they say: "the Serbs, no, we did not commit war crimes". That is the public we are now about to provoke with this project. (Aleksandar Trifunović, Buka, BiH, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

We have to open a debate on the fact that the very act of "doing nothing" means participating in the war.

We have to go past the brainwashing and explain to people that we were engaged in a war, that there were victims, and that we took part in that. The fact that we 'didn't commit any crimes' only means that we took part in it. (Aleksandar Trifunović, Buka, BiH, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

In BiH the initiative cannot have political support without the pressure of the international community.

I talked to my colleagues in BiH and they are all quietly telling me that this initiative will never get political support and that only because of the political protectorate, it may do it under the pressure of the international community. (Saša Kosanović, Croatian Radio Television, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

Western Balkans countries should be asked to transform all conflicts between them before becoming members of the European Union.

If the political elites in the countries formed on the

territory of the former Yugoslavia truly want to join the European Union – then we need to end these tribal wars as soon as possible in order to become serious EU candidates. (Saša Kosanović, Croatian Radio Television, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

Croatia adopted a Declaration on the Homeland War which flagrantly denies Croatia's participation in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. From their point of view, the events in BiH have nothing to do with Croatia.

How do you think you can cope with the problem we have in Croatia – they are not interested in anything outside Croatia; not even a million signatures will prompt them: they will closely monitor how many Croats or Serbs or Chinese signed the petition. The Croatian Parliament adopted a Declaration on the Homeland War and they outright deny Croatia's participation in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Croatian politicians and Croatian citizens don't care about what happened in BiH, in Serbia, in Kosovo or in Montenegro. (Saša Kosanović, Croatian Radio Television, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

RECOM should make a list of concentration camps and other detention places and recommend that memorials be built in these locations.

One of the lists to be included in the upcoming report of RECOM will be a list of all detention camps and concentration camps and along with that a recommendation to build memorials in these locations. (Vesna Teršelič, Documenta, Croatia, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

The Coalition for RECOM should form a media team which should be tasked with connecting all public service TV stations in the region to ensure that the voice of the victims and war crimes trial chamber decisions are heard throughout the region.

I think that the Coalition for RECOM should consider (...) maybe, forming a media team tasked with (...) insisting that national TV stations cooperate because (...) they are public services and they are representing the public interest (...). One of the ideas or recommendations should be for them to air public testimonies of victims (...). For example, we

have war crimes trials in Serbia and BiH and (...) in Croatia (...) and I would suggest that the team should try to connect these TV stations so that we in Montenegro can hear what the court in Belgrade or a court in Sarajevo ruled in war crimes trials. In Montenegro, we are entirely isolated. (Sonja Radošević, freelance journalist, Montenegro, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

Public persons recognizable throughout the region should be engaged to conduct the promotion of the RECOM Initiative.

It would be a wise choice to use public persons well known in the entire region and perceived as positive, successful persons (...) and it would be good to have a popular person from Croatia speak about a crime committed in Croatia in Belgrade or elsewhere in Serbia (...) and the other way round (...) strongly emphasising the stress that the Initiative for RECOM is behind the whole project. (Brano Mandić, Vijesti, Montenegro, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

Alternative media outlets are also important – they have their specific support.

Ignoring alternative media outlets is not a good idea because they have their specific audience and their specific strength and I think that at a regional level they should be somehow connected in a network. (Jelena Svirčić, H-alter, Croatia, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

All media outlets will write and report about people's life stories.

I can say with certainty that the topics we discussed here today (...) are very interesting and they will certainly be on front pages of our papers, I am 100% sure (...). What is interesting for all both print and electronic media are life stories and I am sure we will write and report a lot. (Mladen Milutinović, Dani, Montenegro, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

Media outlets are ready to put their archives at RECOM's disposal.

We, FENA, have war archives of different events and various interpretations of these events and crimes (...). Together with our colleagues from HINA and

SRNA we can offer you our archives. (Zoran Ilić, FENA, BiH, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

On behalf of BETA news agency, I can also offer our war archive which is quite sizeable. (Dinko Gruhonjić, Independent Association of Journalists of Vojvodina, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

There is no media campaign without a lot of money.

Let's be realistic, I think that we are going to need a lot of money. If Dodik can give five million to the media in the Republika Srpska, I think that you will spend the same amount of money in that entity. I doubt it very much that without money anything will be done, despite the fact that we all claim that everything is great, super, and important. I think that money will have to be spent. (Sanja Škuletić, Avaz, BiH, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

Journalists should be trained and given full support if they report about war crimes.

The Coalition for RECOM should be open towards (...) journalists who write about war crimes. They should be trained and offered full support if they encounter any problems while doing it. (Aleksandar Trifunović, Buka, BiH, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

ERNO Regional Service whose members are public service TV stations from Slovenia, BiH, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Romania can help in promoting the idea of RECOM.

Public service TV stations in the region are still cooperating through the ERNO regional service. We have everyday exchange of daily news and daily pictures from the entire region. We cooperate on a number of important issues such as human trafficking, modern day slavery (...). We can do the same thing here, have each centre do a segment and then put it all together and make a story about the entire idea. Members of ERNO Regional Service are Slovenian TV, HRT, BHT, Federal TV, RTS, Radio TV Podgorica, Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Romania (...) (Željko Tica, FTV, BiH, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

A TV show about RECOM, titled for example 'YES or NO' should be made and aired by all TV stations in the region.

Maybe it would be a good idea to prepare a 60 minute TV show and use all materials owned by FONET and Sarajevo and all other TV stations (...) in the region (...) Maybe a 30 minute program about RECOM, yes or no, those for and against it, and then the 60 minute show. (Budimir Raičević, Radio Montenegro, Regional consultation with journalists, Novi Sad, Serbia, September 26th 2009.)

Consultation with young people

**Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo
September 30th 2009**

The national consultation with young people was organized by Integra, a non-governmental organization from Kosovo. The consultation was attended by 40 participants, NGO activists, and students from colleges in Kosovo. Speakers were Dževad Bektašević (Association of the families of civilian victims of war, Vlasenica 1992 – 1995, Bosnia and Herzegovina), Nora Ahmetaj (human rights activist, Kosovo), and Bekim Blakaj (Humanitarian Law Center, Kosovo). The discussion was moderated by Kushtrim Koliqi (Integra, Kosovo) and Bekim Blakaj (Humanitarian Law Center, Kosovo).

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations of the participants

The regional commission should be formed as soon as possible because there are many war crimes perpetrators that have not yet been identified and victims' family members have not yet been awarded compensation.

Why do we want to form a regional commission for establishing the facts about the events that took place during the war on the territory of the former Yugoslavia – because we need to release ourselves from a very heavy burden we carry on our shoulders – because we still don't know who did this or that, we don't know their first and last names. Responsible people have not yet been punished and victims' families have not yet received any compensation, and that is truly very important for them. (Kushtrim Koliqi (Integra, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

The war in Kosovo ended 10 years ago (...) and 100% or 90% of those responsible for the crimes committed during the war live normal lives, moving freely among us. That is why I strongly support the RECOM Initiative and I hope it is implemented soon. (Mehmet Ajeti, INPO, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

It is necessary for the European Commission and the ICO to influence faster rulings in war crimes trials, especially those conducted before war crimes trial chambers in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo.

It is very important that the war crimes trial chambers are urged to work faster and process more cases, instead of only two or three as has been the case so far (...). Both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo have been damaged greatly because they had a huge number of victims, killed and missing persons so that the European Commission and the ICO should influence the courts to be more efficient. (Kushtrim Koliqi (Integra, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

Victims are being forgotten, governments in the region are failing to solve the fate of 16,000 missing persons which makes this initiative indispensable.

I think that only 10 years after the end of the war victims are forgotten by the public and they are only mentioned during different ceremonies (...). There are over 16,000 missing persons in the region and yet there is not a clue about what happened to them. It is our civic duty to do more for them since the government which is directly responsible for them is not doing anything to shed light on their fate. That is why we need to force this issue, give our contribution and support it, and also raise awareness in public about the need to deal with the past. (Vjosa Rexhepi, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

We are, so to speak, a state. It is really bad because no one cares or takes any action (...). They may only care about us [the victims] as their fellow citizens, neighbours, they only take care about us when they need us for their own political promotion and interest. However, during this long period of time, they don't really care about what is going on with us.

(Kimete Ukaj, NPU, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

Without a regional approach the destiny of the missing in Kosovo will never be solved.

If we don't get involved in the regional concept, we will never be able to find out the truth about the missing members of our community. (Vjosa Rexhepi, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

The power of RECOM is in established facts and they are the only thing we can use to stand up and confront fabrications and misrepresentations about the crimes committed by others.

The creation of a commission such as RECOM which would be competent to discover and establish facts, means that a true historic record is going to be published. That record will be able to defy all lies and misrepresentations made up for political interests of the states in this region. Each country is hiding its bad history and the crimes committed under its auspices while exaggerating the crimes committed by others. (Vjosa Rexhepi, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

History is not going to repeat itself if the number and identity of all victims is disclosed and if victims are enabled to publicly testify about the horrors they experienced.

If we could come up with the exact number of victims or if we could hear the victims talking in public about their suffering, then we would be able to move on with our lives at the same time preventing history from repeating itself. (Vjosa Rexhepi, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

It is necessary to organize consultations in all communities in which crimes took place and secure the participation of victims' family members.

It is necessary to take precisely defined steps, meaning we need to go out to the field, make sure that we have people representing families of the missing, to make sure they attend such gatherings because

they know what happened, they lived in the war-torn areas (...). Such gathering should be organized all over Kosovo (...). We should have representatives from other towns, not only Vučitrn, because there's Đakovica, the town that survived horrible massacres; then we have Glogovac... (Mentor Hasani, Youth Step, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

Kosovo society is a closed society, victims of rape are isolated and other victims also refuse to speak in public and they are extremely reserved with respect to non-governmental organizations. This consultation process may help overcome some prejudices and barriers.

This commission will satisfy the needs of the victims to some extent because Kosovo society is very isolated and closed. This is why the victims don't speak and why no one takes them seriously. We need to understand that the victims are mistrustful with respect to civil society activists, youth organizations, and human rights organization activists who can play a significant role in helping the society overcome many prejudices. For example, victims of sexual molestation are isolated (...) and that is why we need to overcome these barriers, encourage victims to come out and talk about whatever happened to them, write that history, and make it clearly visible who did what... We should consult with women's organizations and encourage their members to testify. (Ylber Maxhuni, Youth Step, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

Victims should be provided psychological support in order to be able to testify about their experiences.

Victims should be offered psychological support before being able to talk about their suffering (...) otherwise they will not be able to tell us their stories. So, first, offer them psychological support and then give them an opportunity to have a chance at normal life. (Venera Ramaj, Integra, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

"You will know who you are only when the truth about the past of your place is discovered"

Those who forget the past of their own places will never know who they are. Discover your past to

know who you are and what it is that you want to do. (Kimete Ukaj, NPU, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

If you collect a million signatures, the Coalition for RECOM will be able to influence the international community.

The motto of the Coalition for RECOM is “together we are stronger”. If we are united, if a million people stand behind us, then RECOM will be able to influence high instances such as United Nations, the European Union, and others. (Mehmet Ajeti, INPO, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

It is important to include young people in the dealing with the past process so that they can convey accurate facts about the wars in the region to future generations, thus preventing such conflicts happening again.

Why is dealing with the past important and why is it important that you, young people, the future of this country, know what the past looked like (...)? The main argument here is that another war never happens in this country (...). You can educate future generations and tell them these are the facts about the wars of the 1990s and of the war from 1991 to 2001 and it should never happen again. (Nora Ahmetaj, human rights activist, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

Participants of the consultation in Priština/Prishtinë are sceptical that during its three year mandate RECOM will be able to shed light on the destiny of all missing persons.

The conflict in Kosovo was over in 1999. It has been over 10 years since then and we know that very little has been done so far in the area of solving the mystery of the missing. I am sceptical that during its three year long mandate RECOM will be able to discover the destiny of the missing when we all know that there are still 16,252 missing persons. I think that RECOM should finish its mandate only when the fate of all missing persons is solved. (Mehmet Ajeti, INPO, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

Some participants believe that Kosovo and Ser-

bia will never establish cooperation in establishing the facts, regardless of who the members of RECOM are.

I am sceptical that Kosovo and Serbia will ever be able to cooperate because the evidence we need is mainly located in Serbia. I don't know how much we can really cooperate with them or how much they can help us find the facts that we are interested in. For that reason, I really don't know how efficient all this can be and how much you really believe that this project can yield any significant results, regardless of who the members of the commission are. (Venera Ramaj, Integra, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

One million signatures together with the international community can exert strong pressure on the governments in the region to create RECOM and then those governments will be obliged to open their archives and surrender the evidence that they control.

We are sceptical when it comes to cooperation with Serbia but we hope that the international community will be able to put some pressure on the Serbian government. At the very moment this commission, which is expected to be independent, is formed, these same countries will be responsible to cooperate with the commission. They will have to open their archives and surrender evidence they possess and so on. For that reason we have to collect a million or more signatures (...). We know that the governments of Kosovo and Serbia will not sit down together for many years to come, but given the right pressure, we hope that an independent commission will be formed. (Kushtrim Koliqi (Integra, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

The commission should also be mandated to make a list of those killed in mine fields after the war.

I think that it is unjustifiable to leave the post-war period out of this because, and I will cite Kosovo as an example, a number of people died from left over mines. I truly believe that this commission should also tackle the issue of victims of mine fields. (Zana Ahmetxhekaj, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)
RECOM should deal with both victims and per-

perpetrators in order to discover the full truth.

Since our goal is to discover the truth and come to a compromise when truth is concerned, then I believe that we should consider both sides. We have to include all victims of the conflict or of one isolated case but also, when speaking about victims, we have to deal with perpetrators who are responsible for the crimes they committed (...). If we only deal with victims, it means we are only collecting arguments and listening to victims' stories without solving any issues at hand. (Venera Ramaj, Integra, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

The location of the central office of RECOM should rotate.

If RECOM is going to have a central office, then it is crucial that the office move from place to place periodically. (Furtuna Sheremeti, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

Will listening to testimonies about the suffering of members of their own ethnic community incite nationalist feelings and hatred towards the nation whose members committed these crimes?

Do you expect that after listening to the testimonies of persons belonging to our own ethnic group we may end up having nationalist feelings and hatred towards ethnic groups responsible for the crimes? (Korab Krasniqi, Integra, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

Memorials to victims in Kosovo depict violence. All victims are armed which is directly turning young people of different ethnic groups against each other instead of showing what really happened in the past.

In Kosovo (...) all these memorials overtly portray violence. Arms in their hands (...) set up in public places (...) where children see them daily and are being fed the idea towards one nation that will remain bad in our minds until we die. Is there a way to come up with a national plan to make sure all memorials are at a certain national level, without directly aggravating a person but simply depicting what happened in the past? (Korab Krasniqi, Integra, Kosovo,

National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

It is necessary to mark the locations of suffering and build memorials in those places.

Building (...) a memorial in a location where a crime happened would mean showing truthfully what happened and how (...). In Suva Reka, for example, there is a place where a number of people were burned and that place has been totally forgotten. It is some kind of depot now. A memorial with the names of all victims who lost their lives there should be built for everybody to see and know, especially young people. (Venera Ramaj, Integra, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

We are building memorials but not in the places where they should be. Concerning Dubrava (...), the memorial was built kilometres away from the location. If we do it like that, I see no point in doing it at all. That shows how little we care about the victims. (Liridon Jetishi, student, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

What about those victims who lost a family member and who committed a crime afterwards?

What is going to happen and how should we treat those who were forced to commit a crime because their family member was killed (...)? (Liridon Jetishi, student, Kosovo, National consultation with young people, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, September 30th 2009.)

Consultation with the local community

**Vukovar, Croatia
September 30th 2009**

The local consultation with human rights organizations, victims' organizations, family members of the killed and missing, youth organizations, women's groups, professional associations, and local authorities of the city of Vukovar, Vukovar-Srem and Osijek-Baranja counties was organized by the Center for Peace, Non-Violence, and Human Rights, Nansen Dialogue Center from Osijek, Croatia, Luč from Berko (Croatia),

and Documenta from Zagreb, Croatia. The consultation was attended by 69 representatives of victims' associations, non-governmental human rights associations, veterans' associations, representatives of the local self-rule, and media. Speakers were Vesna Teršelič, (Documenta, Croatia), Ivan Novosel (Legalis, Croatia), Amir Kulagić (Srebrenica, BiH), Eugen Jakovčić (Documenta, Croatia), and Nataša Kandić (Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia). The discussion was moderated by Vesna Teršelič. HR Radio Vukovar, Radio Borovo, Vukovarski List (Vukovar Daily), and Glas Slavonije (The Voice of Slavonija) reported from the consultations.

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations of the participants

Everybody has their own truth, but these different truths can only be brought closer together on the basis of established facts. Facts open up a space for a dialogue, dialogue leads us to understanding which sets the stage for tolerance, and tolerance can liberate us from the burden we carry.

It is natural for all of us to have our own truth because we all experienced (...) not only the war but the entire past differently. And our entire life determines what we will consider to be the truth for us. Facts are what we should discuss, facts open up a space for a dialogue, and dialogue must lead us to understanding. Understanding will lead us to tolerance and tolerance will liberate us from the burden we carry. For that reason I think this initiative must be supported by all necessary means. (Ljiljana Gehrecke, European House/Europski Dom, Vukovar, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

It is necessary to establish the facts and leave a relevant historical record about the past for future generations.

It is in the best interest of all of us to find out the facts, to eliminate myths, interpretations, prejudices, stereotypes and so on from the way we think, and work on creating a better future for all of us in which we will never again see refugee convoys and in which our children and grandchildren will live peacefully in this part of the world. (Ljiljana Gehrecke, European House/Europski Dom, Vukovar, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

We have to do all we can to leave a different kind of legacy to future generations, to leave them a relevant historical record of our past which the future generations will read in a more humane manner. (Amir Kulagić from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

Serbs expect RECOM to conduct exhumations and identification of missing Serbs and to deal with other crimes committed against the Serbs.

I have been monitoring this consultation process from the very beginning and I must say I am really hooked on this idea, most probably because I realized that in Croatia, as far as I know (...) there are no institutions, organizations, or even individuals dealing (...) with the issue of missing Serbs, with crimes committed against the Serbs, among other things, and everything else that happened in the context of the war waged between 1991 and 1995. (Ružica Spasić, Association of the families of the missing and forcefully taken persons, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

As Ms. Nataša Kandić says, we don't know the area or the exact location of all mass graves. Maybe we don't know them in Bosnia and Herzegovina, maybe we don't know them in Serbia, but in Croatia we know the location of 22 mass graves and there are 28 individual graves still waiting to be exhumed. More than 300 bodies of victims who died in operations 'Bljesak' and 'Oluja' [Serbs] are still waiting to be identified. (Ružica Spasić, Association of the families of the missing and forcefully taken persons, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

RECOM is the only hope that each victim, regardless of his or her nationality, will have first and last name and a grave.

I personally see the RECOM initiative as our last chance to give each victim, regardless of her or his nationality, a first and last name and a grave so that their loved ones come light candles and pay their respects when they wish. (Ružica Spasić, Association of the families of the missing and forcefully taken persons, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

It is necessary to find out who the perpetrators

are because they can lead us to the source of hatred and the need to eliminate it.

I support the concept which allows us to search for perpetrators at the same time we search for victims. It is important to find out why they did what they did. If you ask one of them, he may tell you: I heard it from my parents, or in the neighbourhood, or in my school, and that tells us something, it indicates the source of hatred (...) and then in turn, it can help us fight it. (Biserka Tompak, physician, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

Children in Vukovar still attend separate schools.

For me personally, it is a huge mistake that after all this time and in the 21st century children still attend separate schools in Vukovar. Children are still segregated here and I think that is the biggest mistake that can be made. (Ružica Mandić, Vukovar, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

It is not a good idea to make a list of perpetrators because names can be manipulated and we may only cause additional damage.

It is questionable whether we should make a list of perpetrators because I have personally had a very bad experience and I know for a fact that names are easy to manipulate and until you are able to prove something, that person is innocent(...) You know all too well that a lie told many times over becomes truth. The question is how and how much additional damage we are going to cause by naming perpetrators. (Ružica Mandić, Vukovar, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

Young people should be included in the process in order to create conditions for avoiding the same type of mistakes in the future.

I think that the young people are the only hope of this society because if 18 years after the unfortunate events of the past we can still hear five year old children yell "Srbe na vrbe" ("Hang Serbs on a tree") after a football match that does not have to do anything with either Serbia or Croatia, so many years after the war, I think that the young people from our society must be included in the hope that the same does not happen in 50 years. (Ružica Mandić, Vukovar, Croatia, Consultation with the local community,

Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

It is necessary to include Slovenia and FYR Macedonia in the process, regardless of the intensity of the conflict on their territories.

What about Slovenia and FYR of Macedonia, why are we not mentioning them? The fact that the war lasted for 12, 13, or 14 days in some regions, as was the case in Slovenia (...) does not mean that Slovenia should not be included in this process. (Dragana Stojić from Vukovar, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

Throughout the region there is an obvious lack of good will and strength to overcome ethnic divisions and prejudices about others.

We are all talking about how we don't want (...) the genocide, the crime, the war, and everything else ugly that's behind us to happen again, but I am not sure how much we are willing to invest in that effort. Would you let your child be friends with a child of a different nationality? Are you already doing it? I talked to people a lot, not only people from Croatia, but also from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and their answer is (...) 'we'd better stay away from them' (...) 'that's easier' and so on. So, my question is whether we are strong enough to admit to ourselves whether we have overcome that issue? (Iva Nikolić, TABU, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

RECOM should review unjust court decisions handed down in the 1990s, especially those of military courts and also the cases in which the accused were pardoned and victim's family members ended up paying large sums for court expenses.

My question at the moment is whether the commission can review the cases which were processed in courts? The truth is, there are countless cases processed by courts in Croatia in a period of 15 years (...) in the late 1990s or before notorious military courts which conducted anything but fair trials (...). Can the commission deal with these victims, victims of Croatian judiciary? Also, can the commission deal with cases in which perpetrators were acquitted or pardoned and victims' families ended up receiving court order to pay court expenses? (Branka Šesto, Serbian Democratic Forum, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

The main problem is to find perpetrators because they are being protected and harboured by the governments in the region.

We know about our missing, we grieve and we cry because we have found them or not, but the main problem continues to be locating the perpetrators. I think that RECOM will have many difficulties because numerous answers are being kept secret by our governments; they are being hidden in the shameful politics of the 1990s adopted by all parties in the conflict. Everybody is protecting somebody, Đoka, or Ante, or Fridrik (...). Those who committed crimes here are in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bosnian criminals who committed crimes there are in Croatia now. (Mirko Kovačić, Mothers of Vukovar Association, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

RECOM should give recommendation to ministries of education in the region to change their history curricula in accordance with the established facts.

I think that the community is divided; I think that young people in Vukovar are segregated. I think that if they were to attend the same schools, or the same shifts, it would not mean as much studying from different history books (...) Therefore, I think that one of the main tasks to put before this commission, in addition to establishing the facts, is to influence ministries of education in the entire region to update their curricula based on the established facts. That should definitely be one of the recommendations issued by the commission. (Mario Mažić, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

Public testimonies of victims will influence our opinions about what really happened.

I think that the commission can influence our opinion about what happened in our recent past and it will do so in several different ways. One is that it will provide a public platform for the voice of the victims to be heard and that victims from all ethnic groups will be able to speak publicly about their pain and the rest of us will have an opportunity to hear it. And based on the facts they present to us and their feelings with respect to these events, we will be able to form our opinion about what happened. (Mario Mažić, Youth Initiative for Human

Rights, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

In order to secure the credibility of the commission, it may be a good idea for the president of the commission to be from a state not participating in the creation of RECOM.

In order to secure the legitimacy of the commission I wonder if you think that because of its legitimacy, with respect to the fact that it is building its legitimacy on the fact that it is being formed by all the countries creating RECOM, it may be a good idea for some members, main members, or the president of the commission should be from a country other than those participating in the creation of RECOM, just for reasons of objectivity and in terms of reducing the area of political influence that person may experience in a particular country? (Slaven Rašković, Documenta, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

The Coalition for RECOM will inspire dialogue and compassion for victims and RECOM can restore confidence between people and help achieve reconciliation.

The quality of the joint operation [of the Coalition for RECOM] is in the fact that we feel for each other, but also in the fact that an extraordinary [RECOM] idea will last long enough to be fully implemented resulting not only in establishing a dialogue, but also in the restoration of confidence, and I'd be very happy to live long enough to see that we achieve reconciliation, as well. (Amir Kulagić from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

Mass graves are venues for political manipulation.

Victims are being manipulated; they are used for political games and that explains the fact that before any election date, a mass grave is exhumed. Once the election is over, that mass grave is forgotten. (Dragana Aleksić, Luč, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

War veterans and their families are interested in the creation of RECOM and they should be included in the consultations process.

There are over 500,000 (...) war veterans in Croatia.

If each at least has a wife and one child, it makes 35% of the population of Croatia (...). I think that they are very much interested in what (...) such a commission (...), if formed and legitimized (...) will be able to do... It is very important that they are included because they have important things to say. (Veljko Vičević, Association of volunteers and veterans of the Homeland War of the City of Zagreb, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

Public hearings can be therapeutic for victims; however, it is imperative that authenticity of their testimonies is guaranteed.

Any future regional commission will enable victims to speak in public about their war-time experiences and that is a good thing. It is extremely therapeutic for the victims (...) but I will take this opportunity to warn all organizations members of the Coalition for RECOM that all victims should be given an opportunity to talk but that their testimonies should be checked for authenticity and that they should not be allowed to give political speeches. We need to be sure that the person testifying really experienced what he or she is talking about. We don't want somebody to take the floor and tell us 'my neighbour told me this and my cousin told me that... (Veljko Vičević, Association of volunteers and veterans of the Homeland War of the City of Zagreb, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

We should make a list of all victims, killed, missing or otherwise suffering, along with a necessary consensus of all countries in the region. That is the only way to curb political manipulations.

So, it is not only important to count the victims but to make an inventory of events that took place on the territory of the newly formed states so that in 15, 20, or 50 years no one can manipulate these events for political purposes (...). I really think it is possible for the commission to list all victims and relevant events and I believe that all newly formed states will accept these lists. (Veljko Vičević, Association of volunteers and veterans of the Homeland War of the City of Zagreb, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

It is necessary to investigate the role of the international community in the armed conflict on the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

We should not exclude the option (...) to revise the role and responsibility of the international community in the armed conflict on the territory of the former Yugoslavia (...). This was a unique case of waging an armed conflict aimed at establishing independent and democratic states following the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, the conflict in which international community took an active part in the field from the very beginning (...) the fact is that they were here before the first shots were fired. (Veljko Vičević, Association of volunteers and veterans of the Homeland War of the City of Zagreb, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

The key issue for war veterans is where the ICTY archives are going to be located.

It is common knowledge that people here consider Serbia responsible for starting the war and the majority of evil that befell upon the people in this region. For that reason, and within our right to know what truly happened, both as communities and as individuals who had bad things happen to them, it is extremely important for us to know where the ICTY archives are going to be located. (Ljiljana Canjuga, Association of volunteers of the Homeland War of the City of Zagreb, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

Victims can only be determined by established facts.

And now, the issue is who can really be considered a victim. Being a victim is just a short period of time. That person lived before that and if lucky enough he or she survived the very act of aggression directed at them, and that person lived on after the hardship. But that person could have been a perpetrator prior to that or after that. So, when we discuss victims, I suggest we only discuss in principle and once we have the facts on the table, we can make a context of the very events that happened and draw certain interpretations. (Ljiljana Canjuga, Association of volunteers of the Homeland War of the City of Zagreb, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

In order to start a debate on the Homeland War it is necessary to start from the Declaration on the Homeland War adopted by the Croatian Parliament.

For me as a veteran and a home defender it is very important that the beginning of the discussion about the Homeland War is based on the Declaration on the Homeland War because that was adopted by the Croatian Sabor (Parliament) and we obviously trust the Sabor when we want it to be one of the founders of the commission. (Ljiljana Canjuga, Association of volunteers of the Homeland War of the City of Zagreb, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Vukovar, Croatia, September 30th 2009.)

Consultation with the local community

Doboj, Bosnia and Herzegovina October 3rd 2009

The consultation with the local community in Doboj was organized by the Tuzla Citizens' Forum (BiH). Twenty-two people participated in the consultation. Speakers were Aleksandra Letić (Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republika Srpska, BiH) and Dragan Popović (Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia). The discussion was moderated by Vehid Šehić (Tuzla Citizens' Forum, BiH). FTV, BHT1, RFBiH, and the Daily Avaz reported on the event.

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations of the participants

The goal of RECOM and the purpose of these consultations is to make sure facts about all war crimes are accepted.

Then you are accused that you are trying to pardon some perpetrators or that you are trying to blame others, because everybody can only see the victims from their own community and only feel their own pain. The goal of these consultations, and if you wish the goal of this commission [RECOM] is to make us accept the fact that a horrendous crime took place in Srebrenica but that an awful crime happened in Vuzuća, as well. (Vehid Šehić, Tuzla Citizens' Forum, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboj, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

Public testimonies of victims help us feel the pain of other people and build a feeling of solidarity among victims from various ethnic groups.

These consultations will certainly encourage peo-

ple to speak up. By listening to other victims, we will encourage them to deal with their feelings and understand that other people also feel the pain because of things that happened during the war and we will also try to develop a feeling of solidarity among us. (Vehid Šehić, Tuzla Citizens' Forum, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboj, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

Not a single war crime perpetrator may be pardoned for the crimes he or she committed.

Not a single war crime perpetrator may be pardoned. (Marko Grabovac, Search Organization of Republika Srpska tasked with the recovery of missing and imprisoned veterans and civilians of Republika Srpska – Search Organization of the Municipality of Brod tasked with the recovery of missing persons from Brod, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboj, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

I will tell you right away that I am strongly against amnesty for war crimes perpetrators because it may be considered as a conspiracy in committing a crime. Also, in view of the number of large scale crimes committed on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, I can't see anyone who should be pardoned, but I can clearly see that the public should have the right to know the names of all those who committed war crimes. (Vehid Šehić, Tuzla Citizens' Forum, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboj, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

I don't think amnesty for war crimes perpetrators is such a good idea. Each person able to commit a crime should be held responsible, regardless of the ethnic group he or she comes from. (Lazar Blagojević, Veterans' Organization of Republika Srpska, Šamac Chapter, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboj, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

It is necessary to define the following concepts very clearly: victim, human loss, detention camp, and prison.

I have to mention that we are going to attempt to have a handbook printed for all, so that according to the international law, we will define the concept of a victim, human loss, detention camp, a prison, and custody very clearly (...) these concepts are being manipulated, so it turns out that everything was a detention camp, and not everything was a detention camp. We also need to know what a human loss constitutes. (Vehid Šehić, Tuzla Citizens' Forum, BiH,

Consultation with the local community, Doboј, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

As a journalist, I must say that I strongly support the idea of Mr. Šehić to publish a catalogue of facts (...). That is something that will be very helpful for the media, because it is not the same whether a journalist is reporting about a civilian victim, about a war victim, a detention camp, about a camp or something else. These are important facts. That changes what we believe to be the truth. That changes the way one perceives an event. Single minded or reporting without proper information is very dangerous. (Ljiljana Zurovac, Media Council, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboј, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

When one speaks about a definition of detention locations, it is a very important issue and I hope that RECOM will be able to answer all these topics we were not able to agree on so far. (Šaban Ibraković, Association of prisoners of Zenica-Doboј Canton, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboј, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

Searching for the missing must be free from politics.

I will tell you that the reason I have been most successful and I have the best percentage of found Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks on the territory of the greater Brod municipality is that I have separated myself from politics, politicians, political parties and so on. I still do the same thing today. (Marko Grabovac, Search Organization of Republika Srpska tasked with the recovery of missing and imprisoned veterans and civilians of Republika Srpska – Search Organization of the Municipality of Brod tasked with the recovery of missing persons from Brod, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboј, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

We do not know the exact number of the missing because some missing persons have not been reported simply because there is no one to report them missing.

It is not true that we have established a thorough record of the missing. A lot of people from all former Yugoslav republics which were engulfed in war were never reported missing simply because their whole families were either killed or missing and there's no one to search for them. And there are also dislocated people who live in different countries, cities, and we

don't have their feedback. (Marko Grabovac, Search Organization of Republika Srpska tasked with the recovery of missing and imprisoned veterans and civilians of Republika Srpska – Search Organization of the Municipality of Brod tasked with the recovery of missing persons from Brod, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboј, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

Mutual confidence can only be restored if national victims' associations represent all victims.

If we want to be able to trust each other again, we have to say that we are here on behalf of all victims and we don't want to listen to anyone who is able to speak for 2 hours and 15 minutes about his or her own family members without once mentioning all victims of war. (Marko Grabovac, Search Organization of Republika Srpska tasked with the recovery of missing and imprisoned veterans and civilians of Republika Srpska – Search Organization of the Municipality of Brod tasked with the recovery of missing persons from Brod, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboј, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

Search Organization of Republika Srpska tasked with the recovery of missing and imprisoned veterans and civilians of Republika Srpska is monitoring the consultations process because it wants to be sure that the Coalition acts on behalf of all victims.

We will monitor many of your consultations. I was instructed by our Organization which is the largest of its kind on the territory of Republika Srpska (...) and which monitors RECOM's activity. If we ever notice that there are some divisions, that some victims are put aside, we will never be members of RECOM. (Marko Grabovac, Search Organization of Republika Srpska tasked with the recovery of missing and imprisoned veterans and civilians of Republika Srpska – Search Organization of the Municipality of Brod tasked with the recovery of missing persons from Brod, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboј, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

RECOM should strive to make a distinction between those who issued orders to commit war crimes and those who actually committed them. Some war crimes perpetrators were forced by death threats to carry out the orders they received.

We have to do our best to make sure RECOM is able to make a distinction between those who issued orders to commit war crimes and those who carried them out. Many of those who committed war crimes never intended to do such things, but they were forced to, because they were in dire straits and even threatened by death. (Zahid Kremić, Doboј Municipality Association of refugees returning home, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboј, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

Victims need to be guaranteed security so that they can openly talk about what happened to them.

If we want victims to come forward and tell their stories without holding anything back, we, the victims, need to be guaranteed security. (Zahid Kremić, Doboј Municipality Association of refugees returning home, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboј, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

An apology coming from those who violated human rights means a lot to victims.

And I received an apology (...) the police officers who drove us out of our homes apologized to us later because they heard only the best about me and my family (...) Such a small gesture can mean a lot... (Faketa Avdić, Merhamet, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboј, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

Former members of state security in Doboј, who ordered crimes to be committed, are now holding positions in the government.

In Doboј municipality, we have those who worked for the state security and who ordered other people to commit war crimes (...) I know that for a fact because I was there the whole time. So, those who ordered war crimes, now hold positions in the government. We have to stop that but first we need to present the facts about it. (Faketa Avdić, Merhamet, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboј, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

RECOM should make a list of all victims, their first and last names and the way they lost their lives.

I think that 14 years after the end of the war waged on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the time has finally come ... for all victims to be listed by their first and last names. I think that should be the main

role of RECOM. If we can't have the exact facts about perpetrators, we can at least make a list of all people who lost their lives and how. (Lazar Blagojević, Veterans' Organization of Republika Srpska, Šamac Chapter, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboј, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

We are (...) serious people and as such we bear a responsibility to list all victims and make sure that those who not only pretend to be our leaders, but truly lead our country, no longer speak publicly without presenting exact facts and figures, depending on what suits them in a particular situation. (Lazar Blagojević, Veterans' Organization of Republika Srpska, Šamac Chapter, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboј, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

In order to re-establish mutual confidence and reach reconciliation, it is necessary for each party in the conflict to condemn crimes committed by individuals from their ethnic community.

Dr. Ruzmir Jusufović and his wife (...) stayed in Šamac under the Serb authority for the duration of the war and I know for a fact that they had some hard times, just like Dr. Hasan Izetbegović. He went to Sarajevo only after the end of the war. I am ready to speak about injustices inflicted upon them. But, until we are all able to condemn the crimes (...) committed by members of our own ethnic groups, our own people, we will not be able to reconcile. For as long as we consider them heroes instead of criminals, we will not be able to reconcile and trust each other again. (Lazar Blagojević, Veterans' Organization of Republika Srpska, Šamac Chapter, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboј, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

RECOM members must be persons able to develop a rapport with victims so that the victims can speak openly.

I don't know who decides (...) about future members of these commissions, but these people must be able to gain the trust of a victim so that the victim can speak openly (...) there were different missionaries over the time, so to speak, journalists and everything (...) and people gave their statements but never really got satisfaction. Now they are slowly losing hope and patience that they will ever get justice. (Lazar Blagojević, Veterans' Organization of Republika Srpska, Šamac Chapter, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboј, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

Victims do not like a selective approach and they see RECOM as “the light at the end of a tunnel”.

I want to say that I, as a victim, don't like the selective approach and I see this RECOM as some sort of a light (...) at the end of a tunnel, as an attempt to change that approach (...). To me, as a victim, that is the only hope. The courts are politically motivated and that prevents them from doing their job. (Vlado Dragojlović, Association of detention camp prisoners and prisoners of war, Modriča, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboj, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

Victims don't need a picture of the war in BiH, they need justice and satisfaction.

Victims don't need a picture of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. What they need is justice and personal satisfaction. Vlado Dragojlović, Association of detention camp prisoners and prisoners of war, Modriča, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboj, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

Media outlets in BiH use hate speech.

Unfortunately, in the last year or so we have a drastic decline of the reporting ethics in both print and electronic media, especially in the print media. They re-introduced hate speech into the media and we have to fight it. (Ljiljana Zurovac, Media Council, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboj, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

Media outlets should be 'bombarded' with information so that they report about consultations.

Your organizations should send an overwhelming amount of information to different media outlets, either to invite them to attend such gatherings or to send them press releases before or after they are finished. And today, after this meeting, you should send a couple of sentences about the most important things said here today to news agencies and media outlets. That is very important. We cannot wait for the media to come to us for information. (Ljiljana Zurovac, Media Council, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboj, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

Research teams should conduct work in the field, they should visit every village, every hou-

se and they should find out how many members each household lost.

In the course of the creation of this commission, I think it is important that research teams visit every village, every house and establish exact information about human losses and present these facts to a central commission which would in turn report to the regional commission. (Reuf Mustajbašić, Association of senior citizens returning to Doboj, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboj, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

It is necessary to have several offices, but I would recommend that none is in Banja Luka or in Sarajevo (...). I think they would be more purposeful if located in smaller places (...) and even have the central office in a hamlet. (Snežana Šešlija, ToPeeR Association, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboj, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

RECOM offices in BiH should not be located in Banja Luka or in Sarajevo. Instead, they should be moved from place to place.

It would not be a very good idea to have two offices, one in Banja Luka and the other one in Sarajevo because they would immediately split up (...). I think it would be good to move the initiative from one town to another. (Snežana Šešlija, ToPeeR Association, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboj, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

The process of collecting one million signatures must be accompanied by extensive explanations of the goals of the RECOM initiative; otherwise it will have no effect on the authorities.

It is not going to be hard to collect one million signatures (...). But just collecting these signatures without a proper initiative and a proper understanding of things will not be useful and we will not be able to influence the authorities. (Snežana Šešlija, ToPeeR Association, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboj, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

Victims want the truth to be established, to bring those responsible for war crimes to justice and get personal satisfaction through reparations.

Victims only have one interest – to establish the truth, to get personal satisfaction through reparations, through non-pecuniary damages, and through established criminal responsibility of those who

imprisoned them. In other words, to finally establish the truth about what the things that happened in this region. (Šaban Ibrahimović, Association of prisoners of Zenica-Doboj Canton, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Doboj, BiH, October 3rd 2009.)

National consultation with women's groups, women politicians, artists, and journalists on the establishment of RECOM

**Belgrade, Serbia
October 9th 2009**

National consultation with women's groups, women politicians, artists, and journalists on the establishment of RECOM in Serbia was organized by Women in Black. The gathering was attended by 69 participants, some of whom were activists of organizations offering assistance to victims from Serbia, victims' family members, and members of the international network Women in Black from the region (Croatia, BiH, Montenegro) and from the Middle East (Israel, Palestinian territory), Guatemala, and Sweden.

Introductory speeches were made by Nataša Kandić (Humanitarian Law Center, Belgrade, Serbia) and Marijana Toma (Impunity Watch, Belgrade Office), and the gathering was moderated by Staša Zajević, Women in Black. E-newspaper reported about the event.

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendation of the participants

Truth, responsibility, or reconciliation cannot be established until the causes of the conflict and their consequences are clarified.

If we want to find out the truth and if this regional commission is a truth commission, we must know that the truth is not just the facts. So, the facts without a context don't mean anything, context is what gives them meaning and explains the chain of events leading to a certain event and tell us that both a victim of genocide in Srebrenica and a victim of NATO bombing are victims. That's the whole point. So, we cannot establish the truth and responsibility, we cannot achieve reconciliation in the region witho-

ut understanding the causes and the consequences. (Biljana Kovačević-Vučo, Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, Belgrade, Serbia, National consultation with women's groups, women politicians, artists, and journalists on the establishment of RECOM, Belgrade, Serbia, October 9th 2009.)

The basic need is to establish the facts because they reflect the context and the causes.

It is my personal belief that we need to start from establishing the facts since establishing the causes (that is an inseparable process) because while we are establishing the facts, we also get a better understanding of the context which help us figure out the causes. Somehow, I think it is important to start from what happened, where it happened, who was there ... and things like that. When we look at what the people in the region went through, it is true that the facts have never been established and that it led to creating a number of myths and helped manipulate the victims over the years. Starting with that, although it sounds like a minimalistic approach to the issue ... we open up a space for the context to emerge, helping us get a better understanding of why it all happened. (Mirjana Stojčić, Women in Black, Belgrade, Serbia, National consultation with women's groups, women politicians, artists, and journalists on the establishment of RECOM, Belgrade, Serbia, October 9th 2009.)

Individual memories and public hearing of victims can have a single most important influence for developing new policies of identity for the societies in the Balkans.

In view of that (...) I think that insisting on precise facts and individual memories, which are very painful for us to listen to, is very important. When mother Mejra talked (...) it is very important to hear things like that, it is difficult, but it is more authentic than hearing some theories explaining the causes, the consequences (...) thousands or millions – it is no longer important. I think that recording public hearings can be the most important thing in creating a new base for developing new policies identifying the societies in the Balkans. (Milena Dragičević-Šešić, Faculty of Drama Arts, Belgrade, Serbia, National consultation with women's groups, women politicians, artists, and journalists on the establishment of RECOM, Belgrade, Serbia, October 9th 2009.)

RECOM should use legal qualification of crimes.

In our wars, in the conflict, the drastic violations were genocide, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. I think that it is very important for RECOM to uphold legal terms, the legal qualification of crimes. That gives us legitimacy and seriousness because these crimes are recognized by the international humanitarian and it is important for RECOM to keep that legal platform. (Dragana Dulić, Faculty of Security Studies, Belgrade, Serbia, National consultation with women's groups, women politicians, artists, and journalists on the establishment of RECOM, Belgrade, Serbia, October 9th 2009.)

RECOM will collect valid facts that will offer an opportunity for historians to describe the events from the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

The commission will undoubtedly collect a huge number of valid facts regardless of who the members of the commission are. These facts will help future historians explain what happened during the conflict on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. (Milena Dragičević-Šešić, Faculty of Drama Arts, Belgrade, Serbia, National consultation with women's groups, women politicians, artists, and journalists on the establishment of RECOM, Belgrade, Serbia, October 9th 2009.)

Mothers of killed children cannot accept that war crimes perpetrators are granted amnesty in return for their testimony. Criminals must be distinguished from the victims.

If your child was killed, raped, tortured and then killed, your son or your daughter doesn't matter, would you be able to agree to amnesty immediately? It is not that simple, we can't be confusing the criminals and the victims; they have to be distinguished from the victims. (Mejra Dautović, Women to Women, Bihać, BiH, National consultation with women's groups, women politicians, artists, and journalists on the establishment of RECOM, Belgrade, Serbia, October 9th 2009.)

RECOM should investigate the role of the church and other institutions.

The mandate (...) of the commission should include institutions instead of being limited to the acts of individuals. Perpetrators are just individuals in the whole system (...). Is RECOM able to initiate an investigation into the role of institutions? It wouldn't be much of a history if we only deal with individuals

who committed war crimes, if we cannot figure out what was behind their acts. The role of the church, too, of course, should be investigated, as well as the role of the school and all other aspects of our society. All positions in the state establishment had their role in instigating hatred and fuelling the war. (Nevenka Kostić, Women for Women, Leskovac, Serbia, National consultation with women's groups, women politicians, artists, and journalists on the establishment of RECOM, Belgrade, Serbia, October 9th 2009.)

The commission should compile a list of all victims, including killed soldiers.

So, all killed people, the missing, the perpetrators, and the soldiers doing military duty, who are considered suicidal by their own government, in fact, there are all killed in various ways. I think that there is a list of some 40 people and it should be made public. And also a list of victims (...) and it is clear that Milošević and top military commanders who are still keeping many secrets and hiding war crimes perpetrators are to be blamed for all of this. (Žanka Stojanović from Belgrade, mother of young man killed in the RTS building during the NATO bombardment, Serbia, National consultation with women's groups, women politicians, artists, and journalists on the establishment of RECOM, Belgrade, Serbia, October 9th 2009.)

RECOM can help build a culture of respect for other victims and also assist civilian victims obtain just reparations.

Memorials are only built for the victims from national majorities. Laws and reparations favour former fighters over civilian victims. All post-Yugoslav states have their own solutions for human rights violations but it is necessary to come up with a regional response to this problem and I believe that's RECOM. (Tamara Kaliterna, Women in Black, Belgrade, Serbia, National consultation with women's groups, women politicians, artists, and journalists on the establishment of RECOM, Belgrade, Serbia, October 9th 2009.)

Victims should be approached carefully with the help of different experts.

When there is so much suffering around us, I'm not even sure how to handle it without a significant support (...). We should have psychologists included, a lot of psychiatrists, and legal support, too. And (...)

there should be a channel on all TV stations featuring victims' testimonies, families who suffered rape and all other sorts of crime to get a hold of their life. (Mensura Lula Mikijelj, National consultation with women's groups, women politicians, artists, and journalists on the establishment of RECOM, Belgrade, Serbia, October 9th 2009.)

It is necessary to secure serious media strategies in order for RECOM to be successful.

A proper marketing and media strategy is needed for this kind of project. (Nastasja Radović, Republic (monthly newspaper), Serbia, National consultation with women's groups, women politicians, artists, and journalists on the establishment of RECOM, Belgrade, Serbia, October 9th 2009.)

Victims' hearings will have an impact only if they are aired on all TV stations at the same time. Victims must be informed about the way their statements are going to be used.

There should be one channel airing all the time victims' testimonies (...) or various channels airing the hearings of victims at the same time. (Mensura Lula Mikijelj, National consultation with women's groups, women politicians, artists, and journalists on the establishment of RECOM, Belgrade, Serbia, October 9th 2009.)

The question is how to make sure that victims can take part in the process after they have testified (...) so that they can control the contribution they have made (...). Are they going to be informed properly about the way their testimony will be used? (Ivana Vitas, Women in Black, Belgrade, Serbia, National consultation with women's groups, women politicians, artists, and journalists on the establishment of RECOM, Belgrade, Serbia, October 9th 2009.)

Non-governmental organizations and victims' associations should prepare a timely plan for the implementation of the conclusions of the commission. The best solution for that is a joint effort before and after the creation of the commission, as well as after the adoption of the report.

I believe that there is a need to work together all the time, in the process preceding the creation of the commission and during its operation, and especially once the report and the suggestions of the commission are adopted. This is where we failed in

Guatemala. We did not have a clear strategy what to do with the report and everything remained in the hands of the government which was not willing to accept responsibility. It is very important to have a plan of implementation of the conclusions of the commission in place. (Rosalina Tuyuc Velasquez, Congavina, Guatemala, National consultation with women's groups, women politicians, artists, and journalists on the establishment of RECOM, Belgrade, Serbia, October 9th 2009.)

Non-governmental organizations should develop a member nomination strategy. Parliaments in the region should elect members of the commission.

We have to develop a member nomination strategy to be ready when the time comes. It should be done by our respective parliaments or the president. It will be easier to influence it if the president does it (...). It depends of course on who the president is. I think it is very important to have a unified opinion on this for the entire region so that the suggestion goes through all parliaments in the region. This is much better. (Rada Borić, Center for Women's Studies, Zagreb, Croatia, National consultation with women's groups, women politicians, artists, and journalists on the establishment of RECOM, Belgrade, Serbia, October 9th 2009.)

The mandate of the commission should be a result of a compromise, but civil society should not be afraid to exert pressure on the governments to form the commission in accordance with the civil society initiative.

It is customary to make many compromises in the process of determining the mandate of the commission. Civil society (...) only comes up with some proposals about the mandate of the commission and then the government decides because the government has the power to create the commission. The thing is that civil society should not be afraid to exert pressure on the government (...). Ridiculous things have happened in cases when the government refused to accommodate the demands of the civil society (...). Civil society can bring a lot of victims into the whole story (...) and it is important that the most important facts about the victims and the event must be entered into the report. (Marijana Toma, Impunity Watch, Belgrade, Serbia, National consultation with women's groups, women politicians, artists, and journalists on the establishment of RECOM, Belgrade, Serbia, October 9th 2009.)

RECOM should investigate the plight of the Roma people which has been undocumented so far.

RECOM should find out the facts about the plight of the Roma population, the number of Roma women who were raped or killed. Many Roma people lost their lives in this war, especially in rural areas. We only started investigating the suffering of rural women in Serbia and RECOM should be able to help with that. (Sonja Prodanović, Women in Black, Belgrade, Serbia, National consultation with women's groups, women politicians, artists, and journalists on the establishment of RECOM, Belgrade, Serbia, October 9th 2009.)

RECOM's ideas are rational, but insufficient for a feminist approach.

These ideas are quite rational, but not sufficient for a feminist approach. And as I just explained, justice is as important as it is important for us to take care of each other. (Lepa Mladenović, Autonomous Women's Center, Belgrade, Serbia, National consultation with women's groups, women politicians, artists, and journalists on the establishment of RECOM, Belgrade, Serbia, October 9th 2009.)

Consultation with the local community

**Cazin Bosnia and Herzegovina
October 10th 2009**

The consultation was organized by "Izvor" Association of Women from Prijedor (Prijedor, BiH) and was attended by 30 representatives of associations of the families of the missing, representatives of the association of former detention camp inmates, the association of the blind, non-governmental organizations, social work centres, journalists, and others. Speakers were Bogdan Ivanišević (International Centre for Transitional Justice) and Dragan Popović (Humanitarian Law Centre, Serbia). The debate was moderated by Vehid Šehić (Citizens' of Tuzla Forum, Tuzla, BiH). RTRS, FTV, and BHTV1 reported on the consultation.

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations

Association of former detention camp inmates wants a clear vision of the initiative and its role

in the process and with respect to RECOM.

The Association of former detention camp inmates (...) what is our role? What are we expected to contribute or not? How can we do it? [Once we know that] we will be here for this project and we will take part in it (...) We need to have a clear vision, our role in the entire process, we consider ourselves a very competent and relevant organization and we believe we can take an active part in any process, but we need to understand clearly what are assignments are, what are duties and obligations are. (Murat Tahirović, Association of Former Detention Camp Inmates, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

Except for the Commission for Srebrenica, other truth commissions have not had any results. There is a dilemma whether the name 'commission' will influence RECOM's work or will it in the end only depend on the work of its members.

A statesman said a long time ago that if you don't want a job to be done you should form a commission (...). I am afraid that we are going to end up with no results. Let's at least change the name, let's not call it a commission. We are all aware of the fact that not a single commission ever, in any field, had any significant results. In this brochure we have here, we can read about four or five commissions which were formed shortly after the war, the Commission for Srebrenica, the commission for Sarajevo, the Commission for the Avdo Palić case, and the Commission for Bijeljina. Only the Commission for Srebrenica did a lot and yielded many valuable results but only after it started the second time around (...). The Commission for Sarajevo never did anything worth mentioning, just like the Commission for the Avdo Palić case, and the Commission for Bijeljina. (Mirsad Duratović, Association of Detention Camp Inmates, Prijedor '92, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

All these earlier commissions, they did not fail because of their name, they failed because their members did not want to disclose the truth. I don't mind the RECOM name, but at least we should try to staff it with competent people. (Beha Šaćir, Social Work Centre, Velika Kladuša, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

The Coalition for RECOM and victims asso-

ciations must be entitled to check individuals before they are nominated by parliaments to be members of the commission.

I think that RECOM should make recommendations before individuals are nominated and that all those nominated must have their background checks performed by either the Board of the Coalition for RECOM or by the families of the victims... It is clear that the parliaments must adopt a decision to form this commission and nominate its members, but we should make sure that no one is nominated before their background is checked. (Mirsad Duratović, Association of Detention Camp Inmates, Prijedor '92, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

There are many victims who still haven't given their statements to prosecutorial offices.

I personally spoke to Mr. Barašanin [Milorad Barašanin, Prosecutor-in-Chief of BiH] on the phone and I asked him to send me a SIPA representative [State Investigation and Protection Agency] because no one has sent me a SIPA representative since 1995, to take my statement, so that I can tell in my own words what I know, and I have quite a file about war crimes committed in BiH. (Medo Grahović, former detention camp inmate in a camp controlled by the National Defence of Western Bosnia, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

Members of the commission should be victims, but also intellectuals and activists involved with organizations that advocate tolerance and reconciliation among communities.

I think that the commission shouldn't only be made of members of victims' associations. They are more than welcome, of course, and they should by all means be No. 1 in the whole process. But, if we don't have members from various other associations I'm afraid the commission will turn into something similar to a state parliament or government. So, three contradicting sides and it's never ending story. The commission needs intellectuals (...). I also think that associations promoting establishing and supporting tolerance and reconciliation should also be included (...) which may give more objectivity to the commission. (Šefika Muratagić, Association Key to the Future, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

One of the goals of the commission should be to establish tolerance and promote reconciliation between communities.

One of the mandates of the commission should be to contribute to the process of reconciliation and tolerance (...). There are people who regularly attend such gatherings but if reconciliation is mentioned as a goal, they strongly object to it. I don't understand it. Do you want us to live like savage warring tribes for the next 100 years? Is it finally the time to start thinking about our children and their future in this region. (Šefika Muratagić, Association Key to the Future, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

Amnesty or pardon granting should not be part of the mandate of this commission. There is a dilemma whether RECOM should be allowed to give recommendations to courts for sentence reduction for those accused who testified before the commission about the war crimes they committed.

However, I think that RECOM should not be allowed to grant amnesty or pardon. I really think it shouldn't be in its mandate. (Šefika Muratagić, Association Key to the Future, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

If not granting amnesty, we have leaned towards sentence reduction, (...) which would constitute an instrument for more efficient work of the commission in establishing the truth. But I personally would use a road less travelled if it meant making sure that perpetrators don't get any sentence mitigation. (Beha Šaćir, Social Work Centre, Velika Kladuša, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

I have always been against amnesty as a tool. We are not talking about a crime here, we are talking about a war crime (...) which is not subject to statute of limitations and I am sure that every court will consider it a mitigating circumstance for an accused that helped this kind of process. It is the obligation of the court. That should influence the sentencing process and affect the severity of the sentence. I don't know if it is such a good idea for the commission to come forward and tell the court that someone's sentences should be reduced by this or that much. But the court is definitely obliged to take such things into consideration when determining the sentence. (Vehid Šehić, Citizens' of Tuzla Forum, BiH, Con-

sultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

The other way the courts are doing it is quite humiliating, offensive, and inhuman for the victims – when courts use the settlement procedure to obtain information from people accused of committing war crimes (...). That is a morbid bargaining business to let the people who committed hideous crimes get away with lesser sentences. I don't support anything like that and I believe that courts should sentence the accused taking into the consideration the crime they committed only. (Amir Talić, journalist, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

The commission should help courts in the region find witnesses.

We all know that it is very difficult for courts to find reliable witnesses. That is a problem for the Bosnia and Herzegovina Court, too. So, it would be very useful if the commission, while searching for valid facts, can help the BiH Court obtain relevant testimonies (...). I agree that the commission is dealing with fact-establishing and that it can only offer these facts to the BiH court, only the facts (...). But it is the facts that the commission will establish that can help the court in BiH and other courts in the region find the truth easier. (Šefika Muratagić, Association Key to the Future, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

There is an adopted practice of paying for information about mass graves. There are some suggestions that it would be a good idea to form public funds for discovering mass grave locations.

Let me just say that I assisted an investigator in finding a mass grave in Kevljanji. That is the largest mass grave discovered in the Prijedor area. We had to pay 300 KM for information about it ... So, for only 300 KM we were able to obtain information and a map of the location of the mass grave (...). This example alone should tell us that we need to have a public fund for discovering mass graves locations. (Amir Talić, journalist, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

Public testimony of victims will help us find out what happened to others.

All of us here, especially the people from Prijedor, know what happened in Prijedor (...). Last time I

said that many things, and you should believe me, were unknown to me until I started coming to these gatherings and listening to victims. I listen to Sudbin, this young boy sitting next to me, talk about the things that happened to him. I can't even count the number of times I watched that CD. And to tell you honestly, his testimony and everything he said, unfortunately, everything he survived, gives me hope that we can find the truth about everything that happened. (Zdravko Kravica, Republic Organization of the Families of Imprisoned and Killed Veterans and Missing Civilians of Republika Srpska, Prijedor Chamber, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

RECOM should have the right to invite representatives of the international community to testify before the commission because that can help establish the political context of the war on the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

We have the truth of the international community which witnessed everything that happened. I deliberately mentioned the international community because they indeed witnessed the events unfolding on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, and the role of each witness is to tell the truth. And if they take part in the investigation conducted by RECOM, they may help establish some facts which are very important for the creation of a historical and political context of the events of the 1990s. (Amir Kulagić from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

Facts are dates, people, places – all that can help us understand that crimes were committed against other people as well.

Why is it important to establish facts and not the truth? Because physical evidence and facts inspire our personal understanding of truth. But they also contribute to learning about the crimes committed against others (...). So, it is important to establish the facts and not the truth because truth is a subjective feeling whereas facts are material, they are objective (...). Those are the names of people. Those are the dates. (Amir Kulagić from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

The commission should verify information on victims kept on file by victim associations and non-governmental organizations.

Mr. Tahirović [president of the Association of Former Detention Camp Inmates of BiH] said that his association has already become familiar with a number of mass graves, mass grave locations, detention camps, etc. and that the commission should definitely set up a verification procedure in place to double-check the data collected so far. If the Research and Documentation Center, Sarajevo [RDC] established the list and if Izvor [Association of Women from Prijedor] established the list of missing persons, it means that this commission should verify that. (Amir Kulaglič from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

We need to stop talking about “our” and “the-ir” victims: the entire concept should be moved from a political to an ethical field.

We should use organizations and gatherings like this one (...) to try to reach a consensus on the concept of victims and to eliminate discussion of our and their victims. We need to be able to cross that bridge and start discussion about victims in an ethical and professional way rather than in a political way. (Besad Hadžić, psychiatrist from Ključ, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

Professionalism and morality issues should be the prevailing criteria in selecting members of the commission.

It is more than obvious that as soon as RECOM becomes functional, politicians are going to try to push their people in. It is very difficult being apolitical, even more difficult being liberal and talk about things. That's courage. In our part of the world, just being normal takes courage. Let me tell you something – people who spend a lot of time working with victims, if they are not regularly supervised and debriefed, they themselves become contaminated and their thinking becomes shaped by paradigms, just like the thinking of the victims they are dealing with. It is important that those people are armed with professionalism and a high standard of morality. Besad Hadžić, psychiatrist from Ključ, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

Religious communities have spread intolerance between communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina over the years.

Religious communities, also, which are an important part of our societies, have spread national intolerance over the years especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina. (Safet Muratović, The Key to the Future, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

RECOM should have between 20 and 25 commissaries.

There should not be too many or too few commissaries. I personally think that it is ideal to have between 20 and 25 members of the commission. But we cannot have the same number of members from Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, or Croatia, but the number must depend on the number of victims from each of these former republics. For example, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot have the same number because compared to BiH, Montenegro only had a small number of victims. (Amir Kulaglič from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

The Regional Commission should have offices in all states in the region and they should be aided by non-governmental organizations in collecting statements of victims and witnesses.

I agree that the Regional Commission should be one body, but it should have offices in all of the states affected by recent wars and these offices should be able to support significantly the work of the Commission. Having said that, let me just say that I strongly believe that the non-governmental sector and various organizations and associations should aid these offices in their efforts to collect statements from victims and witnesses, to collect physical evidence, documents, etc. (Amir Kulaglič from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

The commission should investigate killings, persecution, rapes, and torture and detention camps.

We talked here about war crimes and other serious human rights violations. But, what are really these other serious human rights violations... First of all killings, then persecution, rape crimes, and finally torture in detention camps. (Amir Kulaglič from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

The report of RECOM should have a historical context (preparation of crimes), a register of places of suffering and a complete list of victims.

The report which would be conducted by the commission, in my opinion, should have three parts (...). The first segment must be a political/historical context as a foundation. That part should help us get a better picture of the role of religious communities, media, and so on. Because what they did preceded the crime itself. That was an introductory stage (...). The second part of the report must refer to, I'd say, different methods and forms of committing crimes. And the third part [would be] a list of victims. (Amir Kulagić from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

Social work centres should be included in the consultation process because victims and war invalids exercise their rights through these institutions.

Some of our clients are victims. Civilian victims of war, no-war invalids who exercise their rights through these centres so I thought that maybe we should organize a meeting like this with social work centres directors or representatives together with representatives of the ministries funding these centres because we are fighting for the benefit of the victims, or the financial support they receive through these social work centres. (Beha Šaćir, Social Work Centre, Velika Kladuša, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

We need the truth in order to offer better education and because of the need to write a new chapter in our history based on established facts.

Our children are being short-changed on their education because we have no proper school text books and God only knows when we will be able to have them if we continue like this. We need to find the truth and put together different truths we come up with and then we need to put together an expert team to write a real history book. It is hard to say when that will happen. (Beha Šaćir, Social Work Centre, Velika Kladuša, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

RECOM should regain the trust of victims that their testimonies are going to be put to good use. People don't want to talk (...). It is very difficult to gain the trust of victims to tell you about their suf-

fering (...). Because I am a victim and I know what it means to tell the truth. Do you understand that? Every time you talk about it you go through the same horror again and you suffer all over again (...). It is very simple, people get lost after giving their statements so many times all over again and finally they say "what's the point?" (...) and they give it all up. I think that this organization may actually be some kind of a guideline or a way to convince the victims to start believing again that the statement they give will serve a good purpose. (Bernada Jukić-Kličić, Social Work Center in Bosanski Petrovac, BiH, Consultation with the local community, Cazin, BiH, October 10th 2009.)

National consultation with religious communities on the Initiative for RECOM

**Zagreb, Croatia
October 16th 2009**

The national consultation with members of religious communities and their leaders was organized by Center for Peace, Non-violence, and Human Rights, Osijek (Croatia) and Documenta, Zagreb (Croatia). The gathering was attended by 47 participants, members of religious communities and their leaders, representatives of non-governmental human rights organizations, journalists, as well as several persons monitoring the event on behalf of the OSCE, ICTY, Delegation of the European Union in the Republic of Croatia, representatives of the Australian, Dutch, and Canadian embassies in Croatia. Speakers were Kevin Dowling (bishop from Rustenburg, South Africa), Vesna Teršelič (Documenta, Croatia), Nataša Kandić (Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia), and Ivan Novosel (Legalis, Croatia). The gathering was moderated by Katarina Kruhonja (Center for Peace, Non-violence, and Human Rights, Osijek, Croatia). HRT, Novi List, Novosti daily, and H-alter reported about the event.

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations of the participants

Christians must always side with victims. Victims can help our societies heal and eliminate evil among us.

As a member of the St. Francis order, as a Christian, I believe that it is absolutely necessary to

side with victims. Unfortunately, we all have victims that nobody wants. But now that we do have them, I think that (...) they are the most valuable members of the society because they hold the key to moving our societies and communities forward to new relations. They can help heal society; they can help purge our memory (...). And we have to be there for them every step of the way. We have to create a favourable environment for victims to be able, first of all, bear their tragedy, and secondly, to reach the primary Christian goal (...) which is to use their will and their free choice and stop the spiral of evil. (Fra Mijo Džolan, the Franciscan Institute for the Culture of Peace, Split, Croatia, National consultation with religious communities on the Initiative for RECOM, Zagreb, Croatia, October 16th 2009.)

The regional approach enables us to eliminate interpretations which are being used by the existing political solutions most people are not satisfied with.

Regarding this famous and permanent problem of the regional approach, I think that we should all be brave enough and wise enough in this process (...). We need to make sure that the results of our work don't have any resemblance with existing interpretations which are simply being used as an enforcement of the political solution. First, that would disqualify us and secondly it would drive away a large number of people because the truth is that the majority of people are dissatisfied with the existing political solutions (...); many are dissatisfied. (Fra Mijo Džolan, the Franciscan Institute for the Culture of Peace, Split, Croatia, National consultation with religious communities on the Initiative for RECOM, Zagreb, Croatia, October 16th 2009.)

Believers and religious communities should have one goal before anything else – reconciliation, but there are very few results in that direction.

Religious communities throughout the region of the former Yugoslavia (...) are still not sensitive to such initiatives. They are afraid of any projects that try to achieve the goal set before them by Pope John Paul II when he was here in Zagreb in 1994. He asked all believers to consider reconciliation their primary task. Fifteen years later, we only have a few results of that effort. (Drago Pilsel, Novi List, Zagreb, Croatia, National consultation with religious communities on the Initiative for RECOM, Zagreb, Croatia, October 16th 2009.)

Before the dialogue on reconciliation, facts about who started the war, why the war was waged, and what its goal was must be established.

Before we establish the dialogue on reconciliation, we must truly clarify who started the war, why it was waged, and what was its goal. But we need a lot of facts to do that. (Ante Šola, CARITAS of the Varaždin Diocese, Croatia, National consultation with religious communities on the Initiative for RECOM, Zagreb, Croatia, October 16th 2009.)

The church and religious communities have a prevailing influence on the reconciliation process.

"How can there be God or how can there be God of Love if that happened to me?" Church and religious communities are responsible for answering these questions and adopting a position that can lead our societies to reconciliation through a generally holistic process which includes physical, emotional, very personal and spiritual dimensions. (Kevin Dowling, bishop from South Africa, National consultation with religious communities on the Initiative for RECOM, Zagreb, Croatia, October 16th 2009.)

Reconciliation is very difficult if victims are being stripped of their dignity.

First of all, I would like to say that reconciliation is not something simple. We can't just say: we have to reconcile and then we start a process which we believe is going to be successful. The reconciliation process will require many of you who are victims to be included (...). Mentioning reconciliation to someone who is still suffering so deeply ... their instinctive, direct response is usually: "I want justice". You have to start creating a different structure of life for all of them so that they can still live with some sort of dignity. (Kevin Dowling, bishop from South Africa, National consultation with religious communities on the Initiative for RECOM, Zagreb, Croatia, October 16th 2009.)

From a Catholic point of view all victims are the same because the dignity of a human being is sacred in our doctrine: we are all equal as victims and as criminals.

There are or there will be many temptations with respect to treating all victims in the same way, or treating all crimes in the same way. As a Christian scholar, I don't have a problem with that simply because that in our doctrine the dignity of a human being is a fact so sacred that it makes us all equal

both as victims and as criminals. (Drago Pilsel, Novi List, Zagreb, Croatia, National consultation with religious communities on the Initiative for RECOM, Zagreb, Croatia, October 16th 2009.)

Facts are an indispensable prerequisite to heal our societies.

Our proposal is very moderate – establish the facts in the years ahead of us, as much as possible, about all crimes and system violations in the 1990s, and then use it as a foundation for curing our societies. (Vesna Teršelič, Documenta, Zagreb, Croatia, National consultation with religious communities on the Initiative for RECOM, Zagreb, Croatia, October 16th 2009.)

We will have reconciliation once all countries start referring to their “savages” as “the savages in our midst”.

I think that it is going to be a lot easier to achieve reconciliation, to understand the situation, help the victims, and counsel the aggressors how to purge their souls when we start calling the savages in our own midst “our savages”. Many of us are tired of hearing that the other nation’s victims deserved whatever happened to them and that our victims are “pure; why did it happen to us?” (Mladen Jovanović, the Council of the Churches of Christ, Croatia, National consultation with religious communities on the Initiative for RECOM, Zagreb, Croatia, October 16th 2009.)

It is necessary to bring this initiative closer to religious communities because it may be rejected if people are not properly informed about it.

If we would like to establish cooperation with relevant persons and institutions, [representatives of religious communities], maybe we should do more to promote this project because it may happen that people reject it due to a lack of information about it. (Marija Znidarčić, Christian Peace Circle Association of Citizens, Croatia, National consultation with religious communities on the Initiative for RECOM, Zagreb, Croatia, October 16th 2009.)

RECOM should clarify the role religious communities had during the war. However, it could lead to the exclusion of religious communities from the process because criticizing their role may be interpreted as an attack on the very essence of the religion and church doctrine.

One very useful task of this project, of RECOM, would be to clarify the role of each and every religious community in the war. I witnessed it all myself, and I know that there are all sorts of things (...). However, when criticizing specific actions which should be criticized in the name of faith, many members of religious communities may understand it as an attack on the very essence of the religion or church doctrine. That may hurt people and result in their withdrawal. That would cause a great damage to the process. (Fra Mijo Džolan, the Franciscan Institute for the Culture of Peace, Split, Croatia, National consultation with religious communities on the Initiative for RECOM, Zagreb, Croatia, October 16th 2009.)

Instead of promoting reconciliation, religious media still favour hate speech.

I think that most of you will agree with me that our religious media, especially the Glas Koncila are still full of hate speeches instead of advocating reconciliation. (Petra Pajdaković Šebek, Religious Culture Program of the Croatian TV, Croatia, National consultation with religious communities on the Initiative for RECOM, Zagreb, Croatia, October 16th 2009.)

Consultation with the local community

**Osijek, Croatia
October 17th 2009**

The consultation was organized by the Center for Peace, Non-violence, and Human Rights, Osijek (Croatia), Nansen Dialogue Center, Osijek (Croatia), and Documenta (Croatia). Forty participants – mostly human rights organizations activists, associations of victims and associations of families of the killed and missing, veterans’ associations, youth organizations, women’s groups, professional groups, representatives of religious communities of the Osijek-Baranja County and, as well as member of these religious groups – attended the gathering. The panellists were Vesna Teršelič (Documenta, Croatia), Ivan Novosel (Legalis, Croatia) Eugen Jakovčić (Documenta, Croatia), and South-African bishop Kevin Dowling (Rustenburg County, Republic of South Africa). Katarina Kruhonja (Center for Peace, Non-violence, and Human Rights, Osijek, Croatia) moderated the discussion. HRT – Osijek

Studio, Slavonski Dom, and the Voice of Slavonija reported from the gathering. Monsignor Marin Srakić, Archbishop of Đakovo – Osijek County, received a delegation of the Coalition for RECOM in his chambers.

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations

Memories of the war and the tragedies; attempts at denying the Homeland War, and making the victims and the aggressors equal, as well as arbitrary accusations against homeland defenders make the reconciliation process much more difficult.

The tragedies that befell many of our families and individuals, and their memories of the war are still vivid. And attempts to deny the Homeland War, or even worse, to deny the justification and dignity of the Homeland War, and statements that make equal victims and aggressors, and the occasional unjust and arbitrary condemnation of our homeland defenders makes the normalisation of relations between the nations in this region as well as the reconciliation process very difficult. (Monsignor Marin Srakić, Archbishop of Đakovo – Osijek County, Consultation with the local community, Osijek, Croatia, October 17th 2009.)

In order to achieve reconciliation, victims must be able to forgive and aggressors must admit the wrongdoing and provide indemnity for their evil deeds and violence.

Forgiveness is primarily the attitude of victims not seeking revenge but trying to find peace in their souls. On the other hand, forgiveness helps curb evil and revenge and helps normalize relations. Christ's suffering and his wounds become a symbol the victim identifies with and the power of mercy helps the victims overcome their obsession with violence and suffering, thus becoming a messenger carrying God's invitation to dialogue and establishment of trust (...) and forgiveness. And then, naturally, the reconciliation process can only start from those who have been hurt. Victims draw their strength from the way they experience God's love and mercy which help them find their inner strength to regain confidence in people and subdue emotions caused by war violence. Or, as some theology scholars like to say, in order to have reconciliation, victims have to be able to forgive those who transgressed against them. (Monsignor Marin Srakić, Archbishop of Đakovo – Osijek

County, Consultation with the local community, Osijek, Croatia, October 17th 2009.)

However, if the reconciliation process will hurt the truth and if it requires victims to forget their pain and agony, then we are basically denying the very dignity of the victims. It can also make us forget the victims which will further result in our failure to disclose the causes of their suffering and allow them to remain hidden underneath the surface. These same causes may potentially explode again when we least expect it. Therefore, it is important that in the reconciliation process all causes of suffering and violence are clarified, it is important to know the truth and make sure it is followed by justice. In other words, reconciliation, in contrast to forgiveness, assumes actions of two parties – on the one hand there's the victim granting forgiveness and on the other hand there's the aggressor who is motivated by the act of forgiveness and offers sincere apology, admits the guilt, leads the way to establishing the truth and justice, and finally offers redress for the evil and violence committed against the victim. (Monsignor Marin Srakić, Archbishop of Đakovo – Osijek County, Consultation with the local community, Osijek, Croatia, October 17th 2009.)

It is necessary to form a commission which would be mandated to clarify cases of human rights violations in the period from 1945 to 1990.

In a way, we, too, had 45 years of an apartheid regime from 1945 to 1990 and it still has many victims. Maybe we should have a separate commission just to hear the victims of that regime because they may help clarify the truth about that period. (Monsignor Marin Srakić, Archbishop of Đakovo – Osijek County, Consultation with the local community, Osijek, Croatia, October 17th 2009.)

Some people have misgivings about the fact-finding process because it may be smeared by various political interests. Also, they fear that there are numerous counterfeit documents and many false witnesses.

First off, I want to say that I have my doubts when it comes to anyone who wants to find the facts and establish the truth. Simply because there are always someone's interests behind the truth and the facts and we are all aware of the intensity of those interests, both in our own country and in the neighbouring countries, especially so if this commission

intends to establish the facts based on testimonies and some privately owned documents. We need to be aware of the fact that there are many counterfeit documents, forged papers, and a huge number of false witnesses who will choose to testify in return for personal privileges and benefits. So I am very sceptical with respect to the facts and the truth this commission will establish. (Goran Flaunder, freelance journalist, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Osijek, Croatia, October 17th 2009.)

It is absolutely necessary to establish the facts because it will curb manipulation of the number of victims.

It is totally necessary to establish the facts so that no one can say that there were 1100 or 1400 or 1700 war victims in Osijek and then the Osijek Hospital which kept tabs on the dead comes up with a number of 430 or 470 people who lost their lives. That's four or five times less than some sources. People use these numbers as they see fit. (Goran Flaunder, freelance journalist, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Osijek, Croatia, October 17th 2009.)

It is in the best interest of all countries in the region to establish the facts so that history does not repeat itself.

I think it is in the best interest of each and every citizen, of the societies of Bosnia and Herzegovina to finally talk openly about it, to establish some facts and to finally close that page in our history book. What happens in a situation when a society and individuals are not ready to deal with it? We can see now what happens. We are still talking about the things that happened back in the 1940s. If we had been ready and capable of solving those issues back then, I believe that the younger generation would have been better educated about our past and we would not be hearing Ustashas shouting nationalist slogans and hate speech in Croatian football stadiums etc. So, in any event, we should definitely embark on this journey. (Bojal Lalić, the Baranja Civic Center, Beli Manastir, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Osijek, Croatia, October 17th 2009.)

Public testimony of victims and perpetrators and admission of crime are more important than financial compensation for victims.

I think that the story of what South Africa did for

society [public testimony of victims and perpetrators and fact establishing] in terms of cleansing the wounds is much more important than any financial compensation which victims may be entitled to. I really think that it is much more important that those who upheld and enforced apartheid admitted that they "did what they were accused of, that it was a crime, and they were truly sorry about that". (Bojal Lalić, the Baranja Civic Center, Beli Manastir, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Osijek, Croatia, October 17th 2009.)

RECOM needs to have mobile teams which will scout the area and collect statements from victims.

What I think is critical for the functioning of an institution like this is the question of its mobility. So, we can't expect victims to come to us, we have to go to them and for that reason in the very beginning RECOM needs to be organized in a way that grants enough mobility to its team members to be able to access victims wherever they are. (Branislav Vorkapić, Organization of Civic Initiative, Osijek, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Osijek, Croatia, October 17th 2009.)

Members of RECOM should not be politicians but representatives of religious communities and non-governmental organizations and gender equality should be taken into consideration.

The issue of the composition of this commission (...) should not come under the influence of the sphere of politics or politicians, but definitely the influence of religious communities, non-governmental organizations and it should take into consideration all those standards which have been long ago adopted in Croatia, gender equality, and so on. I believe that the functioning of such an institute, a government institute, requires that the same kind of immunity is granted to members of the commission as enjoyed by members of the Croatian Parliament. (Branislav Vorkapić, Organization of Civic Initiative, Osijek, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Osijek, Croatia, October 17th 2009.)

RECOM should also address the issue of victims of institutions.

So, we have a person victimized by an individual, we have a person victimized by a group, but we also have persons victimized by institutions. Are we going to have mechanisms in place within RECOM to address the issue of persons victimized by various

institutions over the years (...) i.e. somebody to confirm that a crime has been committed against an individual by an institution? (Branislav Vorkapić, Organization of Civic Initiative, Osijek, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Osijek, Croatia, October 17th 2009.)

An individualized list of victims should be compiled and victims should be enabled to speak in public.

What I think is really important and the reason I cherish this Coalition so much is its assumed capacity to record each and every victim by name. That is extremely important. We have numerous records of military actions, TV shows, recorded statements of various war-mongers, newspaper clips and so on. Everything has been recorded except for the victims. It is my desire and I will spare no effort to try to provide space for the victims to speak publicly, although I am aware that some people will try to interpret that in a way that best suits their interests in order to create their own truth. (Miroslav Varga, homeland defender from Osijek, Consultation with the local community, Osijek, Croatia, October 17th 2009.)

RECOM should deal with the destiny of those imprisoned and missing in Vukovar and it should dedicate every effort to search for war crimes perpetrators.

We will be really glad if this commission, if RECOM, is able to shed light on the fate of at least one imprisoned or missing person from Vukovar or from our area and bring to justice at least one war crime perpetrator, of course with sufficient evidence of his guilt. The people of Vukovar would really like to see that happen. (Željko Pinjuh, Deputy Mayor of the City of Vukovar, Consultation with the local community, Osijek, Croatia, October 17th 2009.)

Prosecutors should have a lawful mandatory duty to monitor and use documentation obtained by the commission.

I am telling you this because all prosecutorial offices should have a legal mandatory duty to monitor the work of the commission. This commission can be very important from the point of view of penal law and penal policies. (Slavko Kecman, Associations for Peace, Baranja, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Osijek, Croatia, October 17th 2009.)

In Croatia nobody talks about the crimes committed in Osijek and some victims are not even eligible for compensation.

No one ever mentions war crimes committed in Osijek as if we had forgotten it ourselves. We don't even know any longer if it really happened or we are just unwilling to admit it to ourselves. I don't know (...) in this country no one has ever asked the questions "Where are those families? What happened to these children? Did they attend school? Do they have jobs today? Or have they enough food at all?" No one cared about it. There are 33 houses on my street and they have all been demolished - each and every one. And they were all compensated except for me. I was the only one not eligible for financial compensation. Why? They told me I did not qualify for their assistance program. (Marija Lovrić, victim, Croatia, Consultation with the local community, Osijek, Croatia, October 17th 2009.)

Consultation with the local community

**Kikinda, Serbia,
October 17th 2009**

Consultations with the local community in Kikinda were organized by the Women's Support Center (Serbia) and the Kikinda Club (Serbia). Thirty three participants, representatives of the local self-government, local media outlets, cultural institutions, human rights organizations, non-governmental organizations, and veterans' associations attended the gathering. The speakers were Dževad Bektašević (Association of Civilian Victims of War Vlasenica 1992–1995, BiH) and Dragan Popović (Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia). The discussion was moderated by Miomirka Mila Melank (Kikinda Club, Serbia) and Marija Srđić (Women's Support Center, Serbia) and the event was covered by the weekly Kikindske, TV VK, TV Rubin, and Radio Television of Serbia (RTS.)

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations

The media's war-propaganda of the 1990s inspired the young people in Kikinda to found independent media and offer an alternative to the people of Kikinda.

As a journalist, I am really anxious to know what inspired us, the college-bound generation of the 1990s, to choose journalism in an atmosphere where war-propagating journalism dominated the public space both in our town and in the region in those years. Maybe it was the fact that for a long time there had been no alternative to that kind of reporting and it may have influenced some of us back in the 1990s to choose journalism as our vocation and create a different sort of media in this town out of resentment that we had towards the existing media outlets. (Željko Bodrožić, Kikindske, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kikinda, Serbia, October 17th 2009.)

The independent media should remind the public that some of those who supported the war and the creation of paramilitary units are members of the Government of Serbia today.

What we can do is remind the public of those war years and remind people about the way the same politicians, who are today, in an era of democratic government, recognized partners in the ruling coalition in Serbia, treated other nationalities, minorities, and anyone who did not share their political beliefs in this town (...). The public seems to have forgotten a lot of issues very quickly and they need a reminder about how some people went overboard in supporting the war and the actions of paramilitary units from Serbia in war zones in other former Yugoslav republics. (Željko Bodrožić, Kikindske, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kikinda, Serbia, October 17th 2009.)

More than 90% of the male population of Kikinda reported for duty upon being mobilized. However, once in the war zone, they realized they had been manipulated and used by their leaders.

From this area more than 90% of men reported for duty upon being mobilized and they did it because they felt that it was the right thing to do (...) and I believe that many of them realized what was going on once they arrived to their destinations. I know many of them who quickly realized that they had been used and manipulated and who understood that it was the war-mongering media that had created their misinformed opinion about their neighbors and about their own leaders who used it in the worst possible manner. (Željko Bodrožić, Kikindske, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kikinda, Serbia, October 17th 2009.)

Weekly “Kikindske” may help RECOM establish the fact by granting access to its documentation containing statements of war veterans and refugees.

One of the ways Kikindske can help this whole story is to allow RECOM to access our documentation containing testimonies of people who went to war and experienced the madness of war. Many of these people are still suffering physical consequences of the war and many are guilt-stricken for agreeing to take part in that war. I think that may be interesting for RECOM. (Željko Bodrožić, Kikindske, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kikinda, Serbia, October 17th 2009.)

Here in Kikinda (...) we can do a lot by providing testimonies of people who fled Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Many of them came to Kikinda because they had relatives here and many have decided to stay. Their stories are painful. We reported about some of them, but it does require a more comprehensive and serious approach because, unfortunately, many of those who left their homes and decided to stay in Kikinda have tragic stories to tell. (Željko Bodrožić, Kikindske, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kikinda, Serbia, October 17th 2009.)

Public testimonies of victims are important because state institutions destroyed evidence about war crimes, those who issued orders and the perpetrators who carried them out.

Those who committed crimes, who contributed to the commission of war crimes, those who initiated and inspired war crimes, those who still defend those war crimes today, I am sure they had plenty of time to destroy many documents and that is why it is very important to hear the testimonies of the victims. Some of us here have already had an opportunity to hear different testimonies. (Marija Srđić, Women's Support Center, Consultation with the local community, Kikinda, Serbia, October 17th 2009.)

War-veterans from Kikinda support the creation of RECOM and they want to help establish the facts about the past.

Sometimes I find it very difficult to even talk about what we have seen, experienced, and so on, but in any case we can greatly contribute to the work of RECOM if we are included through direct representatives or not (...). I believe we have a lot to say and

can help RECOM in its efforts generally speaking (...) and you will definitely have our support. (Slobodan Kikić, Association of Veterans of the Wars of the 1990s, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kikinda, Serbia, October 17th 2009.)

I think it may be interesting to tell about the behaviour of some people (...) and the conditions in which we lived [veterans from Kikinda in Kopački Rit in Croatia] and so on, that would be interesting. The reason I am telling you this now is the fact that many of these people are here in town, in Vojvodina, in Serbia, and other states in the region, and all these testimonies of the people who were there can help learn the truth hoping that it will help people stop feeling guilty for something they did not do. (Jovan Gvero, Creative Center, Novi Sad, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kikinda, Serbia, October 17th 2009.)

RECOM can help de-stigmatize war veterans who acted honourably during the war.

Your idea is very good for us who went to war and acted honourably while doing our duty, fulfilling our Constitutional obligation. It is so significant for us to take the stigma from our names. State media (...) defamed us, called us all kinds of names when we came back from the war. They called us rapists, plunderers, and the truth is we all suffered financially just as the other citizens did. Maybe even worse. Why worse? Because upon our return from the war zone, many of us found that the companies that had employed us before the war were financially destroyed, that the government even played with the law, including adopting some changes to the Employment Law (...). But the fact is that when the government resorts to abolishing veterans' rights, usually it is groundless (...). Our veterans are dying and their families are left to live in poverty without any social assistance because they "do not qualify for government assistance". (Zoran Kosić, Association of Veterans of the Wars of the 1990s, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kikinda, Serbia, October 17th 2009.)

It is going to be very difficult to find out what happened 20 years ago given the fact that we never found out the truth about what had happened 50 years.

I am sitting here with you contemplating on how to create RECOM, to organize it so that we can find out what happened 20 years ago (...). But we skipped

something that had happened 50 years ago, all state archives of the states formed on the territory of the former Yugoslavia are closed, so we don't even know the truth about the time of Broz. I don't see how we are going to learn the truth about what happened 15 or 20 years ago since we know that these archives are marked state secret and they will not be accessible for the next 50 years. (Zoltan Moldvai, Association of Organizations of People with Disabilities OSI, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kikinda, Serbia, October 17th 2009.)

Both witnesses and victims of war crimes will be afraid to name perpetrators.

Many people will avoid saying that it was the man over there that did it. Please understand that it is perfectly normal to be scared, someone may say who disclosed the name of a perpetrator, and I am really under the impression that most victims will choose not to say the name. (Zoltan Moldvai, Association of Organizations of People with Disabilities OSI, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kikinda, Serbia, October 17th 2009.)

RECOM should make a list of all victims of the NATO bombardment of the former Yugoslavia and establish the causes that led to the bombing.

Is the mandate of RECOM going to include both asking questions and searching for answers, or in other words, is it going to tackle the issue victims and causes of the NATO led bombing of the former Yugoslavia. I think that the example of the bombing of the RTS building is a very good example; we can see both a cause and consequences to understand the guilt on both our and their side. (Velimir Lipovan, lawyer, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kikinda, Serbia, October 17th 2009.)

RECOM should include the period starting at the end of the second world war until the present time and research the suffering of the Volksdeutsche and Hungarian population in Vojvodina after the second world war.

I must say I am a little dissatisfied by the time frame RECOM is mandated to investigate [1991 - 2005] and I would like to make a proposal (...) to extend it to the period following the end of the second world war in Vojvodina. It is necessary to investigate the suffering of the Volksdeutsche population and the Hungarians in Vojvodina because they were victims (...). They were sent to concentration camps, killed,

persecuted, in other words they were ethnically cleansed. (Nenad Talijanov, Kikinda Forum, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kikinda, Serbia, October 17th 2009.)

People who are brave, righteous, and truthful should be members of the Commission.

The key issue is who should become a member of the Commission. In my opinion, first of all righteous and truthful people (...) and since the truth changes our reality, these people should also be very brave. (Branan Marjanović, National Theatre in Kikinda, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kikinda, Serbia, October 17th 2009.)

The findings of RECOM should be included in history books of the schools in the region in order to help prevent political manipulations and interpretation of the events from the past.

It is important to include all of the authentic facts established by RECOM into history books in order to prevent further distribution of distorted pictures of the past. RECOM should definitely see into it. (Šandor Melank, Kikinda Club, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kikinda, Serbia, October 17th 2009.)

It is not only the lessons in those history text books, but the fact that if you analyse them, you can see that authors of those texts are trying to induce students to draw certain conclusions; you can identify hate speech, calls to nationalism, all kinds of things (...). So, an elementary school student simply takes it the way it is presented and creates his or her opinion accordingly. That is how you inspire nationalistic feelings. (Tijana Velmirov, Women's Support Center, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kikinda, Serbia, October 17th 2009.)

RECOM should also establish the facts about serious human rights violations which happened outside of war zones but which are related to the conflict.

It is a horrible thing to happen (...) when children watch their mother being held at gunpoint, it is almost the same as firing from that gun (...). So, outside the war zone, at the time of war (...) three children watching their mother being held at gunpoint, an ambulance not being allowed to pass through (...), someone at this gathering should say whether that was also something that should be condemned,

whether it can be considered a human rights violation. (Zoran Kosić, Association of Veterans of the Wars of the 1990s, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kikinda, Serbia, October 17th 2009.)

RECOM cannot be authorized to grant amnesty to, or pardon, war crimes perpetrators. That can only be done by the judiciary or by a head of state.

RECOM cannot grant pardon or amnesty to perpetrators of war crimes. I don't know if it is planned for RECOM to give amnesty recommendations, but these things should only be handled by state institutions, the judiciary, or the head of state, the way it is stipulated by the law. So, RECOM does not have a mandate to do that and can never have it. (Velimir Lipovan, lawyer, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kikinda, Serbia, October 17th 2009.)

It is necessary for RECOM to investigate the persecution of the Albanian population and the destruction of their property in Kikinda during the NATO bombardment.

At the beginning of the bombardment of the former Yugoslavia in 1999, many businesses of the Albanians from Kikinda were demolished or burned down; our Albanian neighbours were driven away from their homes. Someone had to issue orders to these people who destroyed so many buildings. I think we need to investigate who instigated these events, which turned all these people into a raging mob that went on a destruction spree against the Albanians and their property. (Nenad Talijanov, Kikinda Forum, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Kikinda, Serbia, October 17th 2009.)

National consultation with young people on the Initiative for RECOM

**Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina
October 17th 2009**

The second national consultation with young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina was organized by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights in BiH. The gathering was attended by more than 50 participants representing various youth organizations from Banja Luka, Sanski Most, Prijedor, Rudo, Srebreni-

ca, Bihać, Bijeljina, and Šeković. The consultations were monitored by Mario Mažić (Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Croatia) and Marijana Toma (Impunity Watch) and the discussion was moderated by Alma Mašić (Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Sarajevo, BiH) and Aleksandra Letić (Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republika Srpska, national coordinator of the consultations process of the Coalition for RECOM in BiH).

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations of the participants.

The main task of the Coalition for RECOM should be to watch out for any damaging political effects inflicted upon the Commission.

The Coalition for RECOM has a uniquely important role to monitor the work of the Commission and make sure that it is independent from its founders, i.e. the governments of participating states because we must not allow the Commission to depend on daily political interests, conflicts, and so on. The Commission must be independent in a way similar to that of the judiciary. So, members of the Commission and researchers employed by the Commission must not be under any political influence whatsoever (...) and must be able to carry on their investigations openly and transparently. (Mario Mažić, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Croatia, National consultation with young people on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, October 17th 2009.)

There is a dilemma whether being financially dependent on the founding states will impair the ability of the Commission to function independently.

I am afraid of the way this truth-commission is going to be funded (...). I am afraid that the states will agree to fund the commission but that in the end they will not give any money. (Ervin Blažević, Mladost Youth Association, Kozarac, BiH, National consultation with young people on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, October 17th 2009.)

I think that the commission should be funded by international donors. However, I don't think that the public financing option would represent an additional threat to the independent work of the commission. (Mario Mažić, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Croatia, National consultation with young

people on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, October 17th 2009.)

There is a reasonable amount of concern that the parliaments will try to obstruct the work of RECOM because some parliament members are the same people who committed war crimes.

My only concern is the possible obstruction of the work of the commission. I think it is not going to be a problem to establish the commission, but to ensure it completes its work. The way I see it is that parliaments may make a decision to form the commission, but if people who committed war crimes are members of these parliaments, they will do anything in their power to prevent the establishment of the facts pertaining to these crimes. (Dejan Čabrilo, Youth Group of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republika Srpska, Bijeljina, BiH, National consultation with young people on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, October 17th 2009.)

The generation that fought this war does not recognize other nation's victims. RECOM can only receive support from post-war generations.

The target group you should be focusing on are young people. The generations that participated in the war (...) are really blinded (...); they have their pain and their victims. They cannot worry about victims from other ethnic groups. They just want to find their peace but within their own national environment. They will even go as far as to protect the identity of those who caused the death of others or genocide on other sides. You should strongly focus on the consciousness of the young people (...) because a young person can equally understand other nations' victims as their own (...) simply because they value every human life the same. (Rade Mrđen, Party of the Democratic Progress, Young People Council, Banja Luka, BiH, National consultation with young people on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, October 17th 2009.)

When the RECOM creation process is over there won't be any more manipulations with victims or with the names of victims.

It is important that we now have this initiative and we can't go back. And why is it important? Simply because it will curtail all forms of manipulations with victims and their destinies, with numbers of victims and war heroes. We will be able to leave it

all behind us and move on. (Dalibor Tanić, Youth Initiative for Human Rights in BiH, National consultation with young people on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, October 17th 2009.)

RECOM is a positive solution with respect to the need to find out the truth and achieve reconciliation.

In my opinion (...) that coalition of non-governmental organizations, RECOM, is a positive solution with respect to discovering the truth and achieving reconciliation and also to offering psychological support to victims. RECOM is a mechanism, a good mechanism for getting out of this situation. (Lamija Gudić, Youth Center, Gornji Vakuf-Uskoplje, BiH, National consultation with young people on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, October 17th 2009.)

I think that we can't have a future until we discuss our past, until we deal with our past. The situation in Gornji Vakuf is that the town is very strictly divided and it cannot be unified unless we deal with our past. It is a very important feature and I strongly support this initiative and I hope it will be successful. (Nejra Jukić, Youth Center Gornji Vakuf, BiH, National consultation with young people on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, October 17th 2009.)

RECOM gives space to victims to talk about their suffering, to unburden themselves and make a step forward towards a shared life.

It is a good idea to give victims an opportunity to talk about what they have suffered, that is the focal point of this initiative. This commission has a huge importance for the future of the entire region because I feel that it also has a therapeutic character. Victims (...) who are offered an opportunity to talk will be able to get rid of the burden that they carry and they will be ready to take a step in the direction of a shared life. (Almir Salihović, Association of students from Srebrenica, Srebrenica, BiH, National consultation with young people on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, October 17th 2009.)

The key issue is that the facts about the war crimes committed against the Bosniaks in Prijedor are accepted by the Serbs and that the facts about the crimes committed against the Serbs in Konjic are accepted by the Bosniaks.

The Coalition for RECOM will get the support of victims associations in BiH. Bosniaks from Prijedor will support RECOM, while the Serbs may not be so willing to do that (...). I'd like to hear both sides admit that the crimes have been committed against the other side (...). I'd like to hear them say 'yes, they are different from me but they are still my fellow citizens.' They may both be against RECOM, I don't know. That is the whole point of this story. (Ervin Blažević, Mladost Youth Association, Kozarac, BiH, National consultation with young people on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, October 17th 2009.)

The priority is to enable victims from Knin testify in Croatia and bring the victims from Vukovar to testify in Serbia.

Let's say that the testimonies of the victims from Knin should be heard in Belgrade, in Banja Luka, and in Zagreb, depending on the year (...) that the testimonies of the victims from Stolac and Prozor are heard in Zagreb, that the testimonies of the victims from Vukovar are heard in Belgrade, Niš, etc.

There are priorities, of course (...). It is not so important that the people in Zagreb listen about the Kosovo Albanians or the Serbs from Kosovo who were victimized, but it is important that we hear about the year 1995. It is important that we hear about the victims that not only the Croatian Defence Council (HVO) but the Croatian Army (HV) too, produced in Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is the key – the voice of the victims, the platform for victims' testimonies should have a regional character. (Mario Mažić, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Croatia, National consultation with young people on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, October 17th 2009.)

How will RECOM treat those who lost their lives or became victims in other ways while waiting for the humanitarian aid or those who were killed in mine fields?

How will RECOM treat those who lost their lives or became victims in other ways while waiting for the humanitarian aid or those who were killed in minefields? Are they going to be treated as victims? (Ismar Kasapović, Youth Initiative for Human Rights in BiH, National consultation with young people on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, October 17th 2009.)

Witnesses are disappearing and the truth is disappearing with them. Many witnesses are abroad and they need to be included in the process.

Witnesses who could tell the truth are slowly disappearing and the truth is going away with them. Also, many witnesses live abroad, there are 70 witnesses from Kozarac alone who live abroad and they should also be included in the process. (Rade Mrđen, Party of the Democratic Progress, Young People Council, Banja Luka, BiH, National consultation with young people on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, October 17th 2009.)

There are many victims who moved away from the states in which they lived before the conflict and we have to think of ways to include them in the process because they can offer significant historical material and they have certainly had no place to talk about it. (Aleksandra Letić, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republika Srpska, National consultation with young people on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, October 17th 2009.)

RECOM is a substitute for everything institutions in the region failed to do in solving essential issues, especially in solving the problem of the missing.

These institutions did not demonstrate the ability to solve these problems; they just drove us even further apart from each other over the years. I have been waiting for them to find the remains of my brother who was 15 when he was killed and the remains of my father, grandfather, grandmother, and my whole family. I think that they never will, but RECOM will. (Mirsad Duratović, *Prijedor '92* Association of the former detention camp inmates, Prijedor, BiH, National consultation with young people on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, October 17th 2009.)

It is encouraging that a lot of young people are taking part in the consultations process. That will represent a huge support for the creation of the commission once the proposed RECOM model is sent to parliaments. However, it is quite concerning that associations of former prisoners and civilian victims from BiH are ostensibly missing.

I am a member of a youth group of a political party

*(...) and I encourage young people belonging to various political parties to take a more active part in this process. I think it can help the Coalition for RECOM because politicians, whether we like it or not, have a significant impact on all major victims' associations and also on some of the leading non-governmental institutions in this country. Their absence (...) at least here in BiH is easily noticed. I am talking about major civilian victims' associations, associations of former detention camp inmates, and associations of the families of missing persons of all three nations. (Mirsad Duratović, *Prijedor '92* Association of the former detention camp inmates, Prijedor, BiH, National consultation with young people on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, October 17th 2009.)*

The 'One Million Signatures for RECOM' campaign should not be conducted at the time of the elections in BiH.

*Maybe it is even counterproductive to tell the story of RECOM during the election campaign, which, as you can see for yourselves, is already underway. (Sudbin Musić, *Prijedor '92* Association of former detention camp inmates, National consultation with young people on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, October 17th 2009.)*

National consultation with women's groups about the RECOM Initiative

**Podgorica, Montenegro
October 23rd 2009**

The national consultation with women's groups in Montenegro about the Initiative on the Formation of RECOM was organised by ANIMA – Centre for Women's and Peace Education and the Centre for Civil Education in Podgorica. It was attended by 43 NGO women activists, politicians, journalists and others.

Mejra Dautović (Bihać, BiH), Žanka Stojanović (Belgrade, Serbia), Jany Hansel and Aida Cvjetković (both from Dubrovnik, Croatia) spoke about their personal wartime experiences. Tijana Rolović (Humanitarian Law Centre, Serbia) and Mira Arsović (League for Women Voters, Nikšić, Montenegro) were the lecturers; the meeting was moderated

by Daliborka Uljarević (Centre for Civil Education, Montenegro). The discussion was covered by the daily *Vijesti* and *Bošnjaci.net*.

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations

RECOM needs to address the role of institutions, especially the educational ones, and the judgments of The Hague Tribunal should be incorporated in text-books.

What do our books say? War criminals are heroes. Should the commission recommend including The Hague judgments in text-books? You think we should not concern ourselves with amnesty (...). I think we should concern ourselves with institutions, the media in particular, the police – and that there will be a lot of work ahead. (Sabina Talovi, Bona Fide, Pljevlja, Montenegro, National Consultation with women's groups in Montenegro, Podgorica, October 23rd 2009.)

National commissions should be the starting point and then they can link up across the region.

It is simply very difficult to have a regional commission (...). It would be better to start collecting them within one state; to prepare everything and then link up at the regional level (...). People should find it easier to talk if there is a mixed, a regional commission, but a basis for it should come from inside, from every state. (Olivera Vukadinović, TV Montenegro, National Consultation with Women's Groups, Podgorica, Montenegro, October 23rd 2009.)

RECOM should determine the causes of the war.

Our members who will be developing the model for RECOM will need also to bear in mind the causes because if they talk only about the consequences, if we list 100,000 victims, 16,000 missing, we still won't know what all this is about. (...) If this RECOM, this commission doesn't materialise, I'm afraid that the history and the wars in these territories will happen all over again. (Sonja Radošević, free-lance journalist, Podgorica, Montenegro, National Consultation with Women's Groups, Podgorica, Montenegro, October 23rd 2009.)

I think that finding only the facts about what happened, without the context, would be highly questionable. Without the women's stories which need to be incorporated in the history of these territories at long

last. (Ljupka Kovačević, Anima, Kotor, Montenegro, National Consultation with Women's Groups, Podgorica, Montenegro, October 23rd 2009.)

RECOM should recommend institutional reforms and the opening of secret files and address the role of the church in particular.

One of the RECOM recommendations is to carry out institutional reforms; to have secret files opened; vetting (...) that should cover the most important institutions (...) - the Serbian Orthodox Church which was a war-monger, which justified war crimes and participated in the glorification of criminals; which gave its blessing and canonised those who either participated in war crimes or condoned them. (Staša Zajević, Women in Black, Belgrade, Serbia, National Consultation with Women's Groups, Podgorica, Montenegro, October 23rd 2009.)

RECOM should examine the role media and individual journalists played in war-mongering.

It is necessary to establish the facts and the role played by the media in war-mongering and [find] the names. In Montenegro we can name and show precisely who is responsible (...), not all journalists are the same, they do not all bear the same responsibility. (Ljupka Kovačević, Anima, Kotor, Montenegro, National Consultation with Women's Groups, Podgorica, Montenegro, October 23rd 2009.)

I think that Radio-Television Montenegro must be named alongside all the other institutions because it did what it did (...). In other words, along with politicians, the judiciary, the police, the military, everybody, because it does not function to this day. All this whitewashing of CVs (...), only initiatives like this one, to keep talking about it, but do it non-stop (can achieve something) (Ervina Dabižinović, Anima, Kotor, Montenegro, National Consultation with Women's Groups, Podgorica, Montenegro, October 23rd 2009.)

The Commission's mandate should include the forcible mobilisation of refugees and Serbian citizens.

(I propose) to include yet another war crime, namely the forcible mobilisation of refugees in Serbia; and we've kept a very accurate record of this as much as we were able to (...) all the men who were forcibly mobilised ought to be victims. We also recommend checking whether these states are willing to say how

many young men were mobilised forcibly. (Staša Zajević, Women in Black, Belgrade, Serbia, National Consultation with Women's Groups, Podgorica, Montenegro, October 23rd 2009.)

RECOM may not neglect the gender aspect of justice.

Will RECOM really remain blind and silent with regard to the gender aspect of justice? Women want it talked about, so that we remember and establish who did what and to whom (...). I want to know why somebody could sleep while another's life was going to pieces. (Ervin Dabižinović, Anima, Kotor, Montenegro, National Consultation with Women's Groups, Podgorica, Montenegro, October 23rd 2009.)

The victims of rape need to testify about their experience before RECOM, but they also need to be adequately protected.

It was a war against the civilian population, waged over the bodies of women. True, women's testimonies about this crime are essential but it is also important how the expertise is prepared, what kind of protection they need to get. (Biljana Zeković, SOS Podgorica, Montenegro, National Consultation with Women's Groups, Podgorica, Montenegro, October 23rd 2009.)

Women's organisations request separate consultations rather than have them as a part of the general consultations.

We must insist within the RECOM leadership that the women's consultations should stop being just a part of all consultations; they need to be separate for every one of us, if need be. (Memnuna Zvizdić, Women for Women, Sarajevo, B&H, National Consultation with Women's Groups, Podgorica, Montenegro, October 23rd 2009.)

Many women in the region want to help with the formation of RECOM; they should be given a chance

I think there are many women in Montenegro, Serbia, BiH and elsewhere across the region who would like to participate in all this, but are not given a chance, no opportunity is offered them. I think there is a vast number of people who need to be galvanised into action. (Tanja Jovović, Anima, Kotor, Montenegro, National Consultation with Women's Groups, Podgorica, Montenegro, October 23rd 2009.)

Local consultation with homeland defenders

Donja Stubica, Croatia

October 28th 2009

The local consultation with homeland defenders in Donja Stubica, Croatia was organized by MIRAMIDA center (Croatia). Twenty-three participants attended the gathering. Panellists were Eugen Jakovičić (Documenta, Croatia), Vesna Teršelič (Documenta, Croatia), Dragan Popović (Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia), Gordan Bosanac (Center for Peace Studies, Croatia), and Suzana Kunac (B.a.b.e., Croatia). The discussion was moderated by Goran Božičević (Miramida, Croatia), and Mirjana Bilopavlović (Delfin, Croatia).

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations

Establishing the facts about the wars of the 1990s will prevent manipulation with data, which happened after the second world war.

We are looking at the past but by establishing the facts about the wars of the 1990s we will clear up many misunderstandings and create a better starting position both for the present and the future. That can prevent the same mistakes from happening again, the kind of mistakes we had after the second world war and with respect to the crimes committed during and after that war when many arbitrary executions took place. We have started this initiative and these debates wishing to learn from that experience. (Vesna Teršelič, Documenta, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

The facts need to be established in order to prevent war in the future.

The facts really need to be established in order to move on into the future because without it we will not be able to make responsible decisions in the future, what is it that we are going to be deciding, are we going to be able to convey to our young generations that book and say "from now on it is up to you" or we are going to allow a new war in 25 or 50 years in this region. This is where I see the importance of this. I see fact-finding as a starting point for creating potentials to change our attitude with respect to certain things that happened. I see its preventative character to make sure the wars on

this territory never happen again. (Ljiljana Canjuga, UDVDR PGZ, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

Homeland defenders in Croatia have no information about the Initiative for RECOM.

I'm reading this list of people that should have been present here today, and there are only 10% of us here, maybe even less... People don't know what is going on (...) they don't have information about RECOM. (Ivan Burić, HVIDRA, Trešnjevka, Croatia, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

Veterans have the potential to help speed up the reconciliation process in the region.

I think that this Initiative for RECOM offers homeland defenders a huge potential to help speed up the reconciliation process in the region. That is extremely important because the creation of a healthier society directly depends on the level of reconciliation we have achieved. (Adnan Hasanbegović, Center for Non-Violent Action, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

Without the participants of homeland defenders the Initiative for RECOM will not get the necessary support of all layers of society. Homeland defenders should be included in this process as much as possible.

Without the homeland defenders the Initiative for RECOM will never succeed, it simply will not have the necessary support and a process like this truly depends on the amount of support offered by different layers of society. (Ljiljana Canjuga, UDVDR PGZ, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

By coming here we demonstrated our desire to be included in this initiative and I truly support it. This is finally the kind of initiative where we can start creating our own history, and establish the facts on our own. But I am afraid that we will have to change something in the way homeland defenders are approached or maybe we will even have to include them deeply in the work of the initiative through their individual associations and get a grasp on what their opinions are. (Jelena Laić, coordination

of Homeland Defender Associations of the Karlovac County, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

The Declaration on the Homeland War which was adopted by the Croatian Parliament constitutes a framework and a basis for defining the role of Homeland Defenders.

I will invoke the Declaration on the Homeland War adopted by the Croatian Parliament, and I keep emphasizing how important it is, that it is our foundation. We fought for this country and our highest state authority voiced its opinion about the Homeland War. These are the boundaries which we have to respect and we have to stick by them. (Veljko Vičević, UDVDR PGZ, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

Veterans have an interest in being involved in the process because they want to be de-stigmatized; they want to have an opportunity to condemn the war crimes committed on their behalf, on behalf of the army and the state.

Veterans are really interested in it (...) to first of all try to get rid of the stigma marking their names, their army's name, or their country's name for which they fought, or whichever way people experienced the recent war. (Adnan Hasanbegović, Center for Non-Violent Action, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

The commission should deal with non-selective bombardment of cities, sniper killing, torture of prisoners etc. and veterans can help a lot.

What we owe ourselves, what we owe our children, is at least to make that first step, to open the chapter of these horrible war crimes from the recent war, these horrible war crimes violations, from random bombardment of cities to sniper killings or torture of prisoners. This commission needs to start dealing with these things and we as veterans can help a lot. (Adnan Hasanbegović, Center for Non-Violent Action, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

Can veterans also be considered victims at the same time because they were forced to

leave their families in order to fight for their country?

Are my family members also victims because during the Homeland War I had to leave them to fight and am I, as a veteran, also a victim? This question comes up naturally when I'm thinking about the list of victims here. Who can be considered a victim? In this case, I can consider myself a victim because I did not stay at home with my family and I because I was not able to go to work and the job I have always done and live a normal life with my friends and family etc. I can't figure it out on my own, whether I was a victim as a Homeland defender. (Hajro Vandžić, Association of Homeland Defenders of the 150th Brigade, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

National commissions should be favoured: RECOM should verify the work of the national commissions. It is necessary to standardize the procedure so that all commissions apply the same rules and criteria.

When talking about RECOM as a regional commission, I can only understand it as a verification commission assessing the work of all national commissions, making sure they all used a standardized methodology, a standardized statistical sampling method, and that they all approached the victims and treated them in a uniform way. So, RECOM goes on and confirms that the work of the national commissions was good. So, for that reason, I favour national commissions because of the freedom to approach the victims, the perpetrators as well as the documentation, and the regional approach should only have a role in confirming that it was like that. (Ljiljana Canjuga, UDVDR PGZ, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

We all want to talk about the mandate of RECOM, what it should be and so on, but I understand that the point is to standardize the procedure and activities which should help us reap results at the national level. If that's accepted, in my opinion, that standardization of the procedure and activities, that means that the commissions of every rank and level in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in Croatia, in Kosovo, or in Montenegro, will simply treat the facts which they establish as such and standardize them and describe them in the same way. That's what I understand as standardization of

the procedure and activities. At that point, if there is a commission at a regional level, we can talk about possible members of the commission. (Veljko Vičević, UDVDR PGZ, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

It is necessary to form a national commission which will respect the identity of the Homeland War. The Republic of Croatia already has in its possession about 80% of established facts on the Homeland War. The headquarters of the national commission does not necessarily have to be in Zagreb.

How I understand this is basically the respect of a national commission which will respect the identity of the war and start from what is known to what is unknown, which means that if we establish a unique methodology which will be used by all those involved in the process, we can now say with confidence that the Republic of Croatia owns as many as 80% of all established facts verified by different sides, that there are registers of victims as recognized by the state, that there is a register of homeland defenders, that in place is also a statistic monitoring of forcible deaths since 1989 also operating by certain established statistic standards, so we do have some information already and we have to start from that. But, at the same time we have to respect the will of a local community with respect to whether headquarters of the commission should be located there. I think the local community can make the best decision whether it is acceptable for it to place the headquarters of the commission in Vukovar, Pakrac, Osijek, or some other place. (Ljiljana Canjuga, UDVDR PGZ, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

The witnesses speaking at public hearings should not be allowed to talk about experiences of others but only about their own experiences and what happened to them.

What I think is a bad idea is that form of public hearing. We had an opportunity to hear in Budva [at the Fifth Regional Forum on Transitional Justice] a testimony that was way beyond our up-to-that moment established criteria of a witness testimony. The person testified about something he learned from somebody that had happened to somebody else and that really irritated and frustrated us a lot because that sort of testimony could potentially be heard during any public hearing. (Ljiljana Canju-

ga, UDVDR PGZ, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

Out of eight victims seven say "I speak for myself" and one says "I heard it, my neighbour told me that, do you understand what I'm saying?" It left me with a bad impression, I experienced it myself and therefore I think that the "I speak for myself" type of speeches should be the guideline when it comes to public hearings. When people speak for themselves, they will usually experience it all over again and they will stand behind their words, they will offer arguments as well as a way and facts how to verify it, while this type of hear-say testimony is highly questionable and it should be avoided as much as possible. (Veljko Vičević, UDVDR PGZ, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

It is not a wise choice to base the entire work of RECOM on witness statements alone because they may be a source of dubious assumptions for historical facts to be based on.

If the entire work of the commission is based on witness testimonies, who will be a higher authority to determine their authenticity and the relevance of any particular victim? There are many questions here because it is possible to construe various stories and create an untruthful account, not only for us, but for the entire public, too, and lead to wrong assumptions on which basis we are supposed to establish historical facts. (Željko Špelić, Croatian Officers' Assembly of Pakrac and Lipik, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

Victims can truly believe that their perception is true when they stigmatize someone declaring them to be war criminals, while these individuals can be acquitted in court proceedings.

I can truly believe that someone has wronged me, that they hurt me in this or that way while that person can be proven innocent during court proceedings. What do we do when that happens, what happens to individuals who have been publicly stigmatized? Are we ready to face that or are we still willing to use technical features of recording and verification of the facts obtained from witness statements and then present them with caution? (Ljiljana Canjuga, UDVDR PGZ, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

Victims should testify voluntarily, they should not be pressured or talked into it. If they ask, they should be granted identity protection, both for the victim and the perpetrator.

Victims should not be invited to testify, they need to do it of their own will and initiative and they need to be ready to speak in public about what's been troubling them for so long. I think that would be a good idea. We should not invite people who have been victimized to come out and testify. We should not try to persuade them to do that. That's not good (...). So, all victims should be identified and informed about the possibility of testifying in public, but only those who are ready and willing should really do it. (Veljko Vičević, UDVDR PGZ, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

Public hearings of victims have a therapeutic effect.

I have listened to some public hearings and I've come to understand that they have a therapeutic effect on victims, a very positive one. They unburdened themselves, released some negative energy which set them free. Afterwards, they were able to look at things from a different perspective. I saw it myself, and I know these people meant well, they wanted to help the entire process. (Veljko Vičević, UDVDR PGZ, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

It is impossible to reach a consensus on all issues by the end of 2010. The public is still not fully informed about the initiative.

As far as I understood what was said during the consultation we held in Vukovar on September 30th 2009, we already have a deadline for the submission of the document [the RECOM model and the RECOM mandate] to the Croatian Parliament, and in reality we have not defined the foundations yet. That is very bad since we need to allow at least six months to mobilize the public and sensitize it to the initiative. (Ljiljana Canjuga, UDVDR PGZ, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

In addition to all other limitations we are dealing with, we now have a time limit, too [December 10th 2010]. Clearly, consultations like these require more time if we really want to have the consensus of a nation about something as important as this initi-

ative. (Bruno Čavić, UDVDR PGZ, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

Which victim's testimonies are going to be used for establishing the facts? Who are the victims? And so on. There are many unanswered questions. And if the deadline is really what you say it is to submit it to our national parliaments, all in all not longer than a year, we still have not defined the starting point for setting up the rules which the governments are going to accept. We may come before our government and present a million signatures for something they are not yet ready to accept. (Željko Špelić, Croatian Officers' Assembly of Pakrac and Lipik, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

If we unify the approach, are we going to be able to make people accept it when it comes to defining who the victim is? Are going to be possible to carry it out in all former Yugoslav republics? Knowing the people who live there, I am not overly optimistic. Listening to their media and knowing how they react to certain things, for example visits to places of torture and imprisonment of Croatian homeland defenders in Stajičevo and Begejci, and so on. I am not too thrilled about it. No, I don't see that the overall climate is very favourable having in mind that the deadline for the submission of the document to our respective parliaments is December 2010. (Bruno Čavić, UDVDR PGZ, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

The signature collection procedure must be based on clearly defined criteria.

I personally did not manage to explain to myself the meaning of one million signatures which will be collected throughout the former Yugoslavia, so in seven different countries. It means that we can collect 40,000 signatures in Croatia and let's say half a million in Macedonia for example. That will ultimately mean that Croatia was not ready while Macedonia exercised a very strong will to take part in the process. (Ljiljana Canjuga, UDVDR PGZ, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

The commission should start investigating the events starting as early as 1990 because that was the time the Territorial Defence was disarmed and political rallies and hate speech in the media also began to appear.

For that reason it is very important for Croatia to investigate the period from 1990. Why from 1990? Well, not only because the Parliament adopted the Declaration on the Homeland War, treated the period between 1990 and 1996 as a war in the wider sense, but since the Territorial Defence was disarmed in 1990 which is extremely important because that makes the entire republic of Croatia a victim. If you deprive someone of the means of defence, then that person automatically becomes a victim with respect to the force acting against that person or that entity. On the other hand, political rallies and hate speech along with the changes in the media became more frequent in 1990. Everything that happened afterwards, was just an aggravation of the situation announced by such behaviour. (Ljiljana Canjuga, UDVDR PGZ, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

Institutions should open their archives and all documentation must be available to the commission.

That commission's mandate must not be too long and it is expected that all state organs dealing with issues like this within our national states must be fully cooperative. We want them to open their archives and make them readily available to members of the commission and we want to be able to treat each and every fact in accordance with the standards established by the commission. (Veljko Vičević, UDVDR PGZ, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

If RECOM is accepted by all states, then we can draw the line that prevents manipulation with the facts.

Playing with the history may be very dangerous. I want to say that if we take that approach when considering RECOM, we can prevent some quasi historians in the future to serve false facts about the Homeland War to my grandchildren... It happened to us after the second world war. Everybody's flirting with some facts about the second world war in order to score in their daily political battles (...). If these facts are adopted on a broad based platform and if the highest ranking politicians are ready to accept them and confirm them as such, then the line has been drawn regardless of what comes next. (Veljko Vičević, UDVDR PGZ, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

The final goal should be establishing the facts. In order to discover the truth it is necessary to establish the causes. Once we know the causes, we will know who the victims are.

I think that truth is our final goal, not the facts, but the truth. However, in order to know the truth, we must first know where the truth is going; we must know when it all started and what caused it. So, we had a war in Croatia that began in 1990 and ended in 1996. It is called the Homeland War and we need to know if it ended in 1996 and whether it started in 1990, in 1991, in 1941, or whether it started when Arsenije Čarnojević led the Serbs to Croatia – whether they were fleeing the Turks or they came to conquer Croatia. How long are we going to go back through history and when are we going to start collecting the facts about the causes of the war (...)? Are we all in the region ready to accept the facts that explain the causes of the war? When that happens, when we know what caused the war, what brought it on, then we will know who the victims are. (Željko Špelić, Croatian Officers' Assembly of Pakrac and Lipik, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

If we only use victims' statements in our efforts to establish the facts, then we will only learn the facts about direct perpetrators and not about their leaders, those who initiated ideologies that prompted and those who held important government positions and who planned and organized the whole thing.

Perpetrators – who are they? If we play down the whole event to a story told by a victim, if we only listen to victims telling us about their suffering, in the end we will only conclude that the ordinary people were victimized and that the war crimes perpetrators are only those who committed the crimes directly. We will not learn about the leaders, instigators of politics and ideologies, state officials, who planned and organized the whole thing. We will not get where we want to be. (Željko Špelić, Croatian Officers' Assembly of Pakrac and Lipik, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

In order to collect the facts, we need to restore mutual confidence.

We have to define our mutual relations and gain the confidence of each other. Then we will be able to start collecting facts. If that doesn't happen, I am

not an optimist. (Željko Špelić, Croatian Officers' Assembly of Pakrac and Lipik, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

RECOM should deal with establishing the facts and reconciliation and establishing the causes of the conflict is the next step.

First of all, I see RECOM, literally, as a step in the direction of establishing the facts about war crimes during the recent conflict, pure figures, to try to find out how many people really lost their lives and possibly find out something about the perpetrators, reaching as far up the political hierarchy as possible, to get the facts on those who had command responsibility at the time of the events, those who initiated actions which ultimately resulted in war crimes (...). So, I am here trying to insist that RECOM remains focused on the facts and the talk about reconciliation and what caused the war should be considered the next step. (Adnan Hasanbegović, Center for Non-Violent Action, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

The international community is the main culprit. If it was powerful enough to stop the war, it was certainly powerful enough to prevent it.

And who really committed the crime? I would single out the international community as the main and most important culprit. Did the ladies and gentlemen representing civil society groups ever dare come up with a thesis like this? Did you ever bring it up with any of the international community representatives, although they partially finance such projects, that they started the war and that they ended it. In Bosnia they left the war unfinished, and I don't think that it can end peacefully; conflict may break out again in one hundred or so years (...) because if the international community was able to stop the war, it was certainly able to prevent it in the first place. (Ivan Burić, HVIDRA Trešnjevka, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

There are three levels in the fact-finding process: a local commission collecting data in the field, a national commission formed by Parliament, and finally, the Regional Commission, consisting of the representatives of national commissions, which verifies that all national commissions abided by the same standards and

submits the final document for adoption by national parliaments.

So, this is how I understand the organizational scheme of the Commission - there are three levels: a local commission acting locally and collecting data, facts, documents, victim statements, and anything that's available locally. National commissions are those formed by the Parliament and in order for them to be able at all to approach RECOM, they should allow members of other national commissions to join them in order to preserve their objectivity. In other words, those who come from other states should confirm that a particular commission used a standardized procedure and form in conducting its work. And as I have already said, the regional commission should only be a verifying authority, maybe bringing a conclusion reached at a meeting or an assembly that all national commissions abided by the same standards. After that the regional commission submits to its respective parliaments the final documents for adoption. (Ljiljana Canjuga, UDVDR PGZ, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

The commission must be independent from political influence but it should be obliged to regularly inform the public.

We always stress the need to make the commission independent from politics (...). That's number one, it has to be free from any political impact (...). But its independence should not be used as an excuse for not informing the public about its work. It should be in a way controlled by the public so that we don't lose the interest of the public in the whole. We don't want to be sitting for several years quietly working on it without informing the public about it. (Ljiljana Canjuga, UDVDR PGZ, Croatia, Local consultation with homeland defenders, Donja Stubica, Croatia, October 28th 2009.)

Local consultation with civil society on the Initiative for RECOM

Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo
October 29th 2009

A local consultation with civil society on the Initiative for RECOM was organized by the non-

governmental organization Youth Step (Vučitrn, Kosovo.) Forty-six participants: representatives of non-governmental organizations from the region of Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Vučitrn, and Srbica, by members of the press, students, representatives of the Islamic community, physicians, historians, and interested citizens attended the gathering.

Speakers were Ylber Maxhuni (Youth Step, Vučitrn, Kosovo) and Amir Kulaglic (Srebrenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina). The discussion was moderated by Nazim Bahtiri (Youth Step, Vučitrn, Kosovo).

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations

The commission should deal with the facts but it should also give space to traumatized victims.

I think that this commission should, in addition to dealing with the facts, give space to the victims who are still trying to forget their wounds, be it physical or emotional. (Xhavit Mehmeti, Youth Sector, Municipality of Vučitrn, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society on the Initiative for RECOM, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, October 29th 2009.)

Making an apology is not enough. Serbia should pay reparations for all the crimes it committed.

It is not enough just to apologize; Serbia should pay reparations for the crimes committed in Kosovo. (Mentor Hasani, Youth Step, Vučitrn, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society on the Initiative for RECOM, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, October 29th 2009.)

Will it be possible to create the commission if Serbia refuses to recognize Kosovo?

Will it be possible to create the commission if we know that Serbia is against Kosovo's independence and still considers Kosovo to be part of its territory? (Flakadan Azemi, Vučitrn/Vushtrii, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society on the Initiative for RECOM, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, October 29th 2009.)

An independent commission can do a lot but only if it is neutral and just. It should not be impartial to any one side.

If we want to form a commission then it should be

neutral and independent and it should work in a manner acceptable for all communities, a commission which will work for the benefit of all and not just one community.

Because RECOM, and its name speaks for itself, is a regional commission and it encompasses the entire region and the only correct way is to encompass all ethnic communities in order to obtain as many facts as possible. (...) And it is important that the Serbs are a part of this process. And why is it important? Mr. Amir Kulagić explained that we should all conduct some investigation within our own community, not only because the crimes were committed against us but because we need to investigate the crimes committed by members of our community against others. (Rexhep Lushta, Islamic Community in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society on the Initiative for RECOM, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, October 29th 2009.)

RECOM should encompass all crimes committed by the Serbian forces against the Albanians in the Preševo Valley (Preševska Dolina) during the conflict with the Kosovo Liberation Army of Preševo, Bujanovac, and Medveđa.

I don't know how much the Preševo Valley is going to be included in the process and it is important that it is because many crimes were committed there. Many people went missing and we don't know where they are. So, the Preševo Valley, Preševo-Bujanovac, and Medveđa should be included. The war in this region went on for a year, maybe it wasn't a war, call it whatever you want, but we call that period a war because many people were killed or went missing so that for us it was a war. I would like to know if the commission intends to cover these areas. (Nexharije Islami Pllana, Dona, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society on the Initiative for RECOM, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, October 29th 2009.)

Albanians are guilty for the violence in 2004.

We should not (...) connect the events from 2004 with the war events. What happened in 2004 is our own fault and we are the only ones to blame for that. We should be held responsible for everything that happened, for the churches, the houses, and everything that happened in that period and we should bear the responsibility for all of it. We should learn a lesson from the war about what we mustn't do to other communities. (Musa Mustafa, Koha Ditore, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society on the Initiative for RECOM, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, October 29th 2009.)

ative for RECOM, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, October 29th 2009.)

It was suggested that RECOM should investigate possible war crimes committed by the NATO forces during the 1999 bombing campaign.

I don't know that the NATO committed any war crimes during the bombing. They targeted military targets, state buildings, and the Serbian forces' command posts which ordered the crimes and the deportation of the Albanian population from Kosovo. (Musa Mustafa, Koha Ditore, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, October 29th 2009.)

We need to obtain data from NATO (...) and find out how much uranium they dropped here. We know that uranium causes all kinds of illnesses and since there are some physicians here among us, I would like to ask them how it affects people and what kinds of illnesses it can cause. (Nexhmedin Munishi, Turkish Democratic Party, Vuçitern/Vushtrri, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, October 29th 2009.)

There are various opinions about whether war crimes perpetrators should be granted amnesty or whether their sentences should be commuted.

I don't think that war crimes perpetrators should be granted amnesty and I would not recommend their sentences to be commuted. (Nexharija Islami-Pllana, Dona, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, October 29th 2009.)

There are approximately 1,900 missing persons in Kosovo and if our only chance to find out the truth about the missing persons is to talk to the convicted war crimes perpetrators who will tell us what they know in return for a less severe sentence (...) If not like this then what interest would they have in talking to us? (Besarta Vasija, Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo, Priština, Local consultation with civil society, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, October 29th 2009.)

Victims have a need to be heard and they want others to recognize their suffering.

Each day we face post-traumatic stress syndrome in people who have been exposed to war crimes (...) They keep seeking medical assistance all the time,

they suffer from psychosis, and it is clear that the government has done very little for them. Non-governmental organizations, too, did very little because they could have organized such gatherings more frequently to provide space for these people to talk, even if it is just to be heard. (Nexharija Islami-Pllana, Dona, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, October 29th 2009.)

Civil society should help create collective memory about the past lest we forget what happened and not only in Kosovo. For that reason it is important to have a regional commission.

The families will never forget what happened. However, as civil society and society as a whole, it is our obligation to uphold the creation of a collective memory about the past so that we never forget what happened in Kosovo and elsewhere. That is why the commission must have a regional character. (Bekim Blakaj, Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo, Pristina/Prishtinë, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, October 29th 2009.)

I think that our obligation is to help this commission (...) we should not dwell too much on whether the Serbs are going to apologize or not. It does not really matter; the time will come for that. However, the problem is to identify all cases, to make an exact record, and have it printed. (Musa Mustafa, Koha Ditore, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, October 29th 2009.)

RECOM should investigate all allegations of mass graves locations. For the last ten years it has not been allowed to build a new mosque in the place of the one that was demolished in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë because it is believed that the bodies of the killed people are there. Regardless of citizens' requests, it has not been done yet.

There used to be a mosque in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë at the very bank of the Ibar River. This mosque was demolished ten years ago and now they will not let us renew it or build a new one. Unfortunately, people believe that the bodies of the killed people are underneath the mosque and there are even people ready to testify about it. We have informed many people about it but nobody has ever come to investigate it although it is in the heart of the town of Mitrovica/Mitrovicë. (Rexhep Lushta, Islamic Community in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society on the Initiative for

RECOM, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, October 29th 2009.)

RECOM should deal with the destiny of the missing and it should also address the issue of victims of sexual and psychological torture.

RECOM should definitely try to make a list of the missing. However, we should not forget the victims of violence, from physical to sexual violence. (Rexhep Lushta, Islamic Community in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, October 29th 2009.)

RECOM commissioners and members of the commission should be professionals and they should hold high ethical standards. They should be lawyers, economists, sociologists, physicians, victims' family members, representatives of civil society.

RECOM commissioners and members of the commission should be educated professionals, lawyers, economists, sociologists, physicians, victims' family members – all those who can help us collect and make public the facts about war crimes. (Musa Mustafa, Koha Ditore, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, October 29th 2009.)

The people that we need the most in the fact-collecting process ... should be lawyers, family members of the killed and missing, as well as representatives of civil society. (Bashkim Asllani, Exploring Intelligence, Bećuk/Bequm, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, October 29th 2009.)

RECOM should guarantee security to members who disclose information about possible locations where the bodies of the missing are hidden.

When the Serbs are present, we should guarantee them security if they tell us where our missing family members are. They are afraid because if they tell us their government may kill them, put them in jail, or even kidnap their children. They should be offered protection, for example, if they tell us where the bodies of our loved ones are, we will not tell anyone who gave us that information. (Nexhmedin Munishi, Turkish Democratic Party of Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, October 29th 2009.)

RECOM should protect the identity of rape victims. If a person or an institution gains their trust, they will tell their story.

In the medical field, when we talk about a patient, we don't reveal fully the patient's identity. We only state the age, gender, region, the event in its entirety, and this procedure should be applied with rape victims. That is a way to avoid the stigmatization of victims. Once they trust a person or an institution, they will tell their stories. (Nexharija Islami-Pllana, Dona, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, October 29th 2009.)

Religious communities should be included in the process because religious leaders can win the trust of the victims and they can motivate them to talk about their suffering.

When it comes to religious communities and their leaders, I think that they should be included in the process because of the very important role they may play. People trust them and (...) if they are honourable enough in all communities and put politics aside and be objective, I think that victims may actually trust them and they would tell them what happened to them. (Rexhep Lushta, Islamic Community in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, October 29th 2009.)

The International Red Cross and all other organizations that have at their disposal information about the events in Kosovo should be included in the RECOM debate.

I think that it is important to include the International Red Cross and all other human rights agencies that have information about the events in Kosovo and the crimes committed there. (Blerim Ibrahimiri from Vuçitern/Vushtrri, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Kosovo, October 29th 2009.)

National consultation with intellectuals

**Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
November 7th 2009**

The consultation with intellectuals was organized

by the Association of BH journalists and attended by Law School professors and their teaching assistants, representatives of non-governmental organizations, Missing Persons Institute of Bosnia and Herzegovina, organizations offering psychological support to victims of war and war crimes, Serbian Civic Society, Research and Documentation Center, the Council of the Congress of Bosnian Union Workers, and independent intellectuals. Speakers were Nataša Kandić (Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia) and Bogdan Ivanišević (International Center for Transitional Justice). The discussion was moderated by Dženana Karup-Druško (vice-president of the Association of BH journalists, BiH) from Sarajevo and Vehid Šehić (Tuzla Citizens' Forum).

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations

It is important for all victims to be recognized and respected across the entire territory of the former Yugoslavia.

In addition to their local community and their state, all victims ought to be recognized by other people as well, to make sure that everybody knows what happened to them. And this consultation process proves just that, to be heard by victims from other ethnic groups and societies, to be heard by those who were not victims, too, and to be reassured that they care about them. (Nataša Kandić, Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia, National Consultation with Intellectuals, Sarajevo, BiH, November 7th 2009.)

The main obstacle in our efforts to shed light on our recent past are politicians and that segment of the general public who perceive "their own" perpetrators convicted of war crimes as heroes.

There is no readiness to recognize the fact that crimes have been committed. Instead we have politicians who think it is a good idea to send a government-owned plane to pick up a war crimes perpetrator who has publicly recognized that he has committed a war crime, though he later denies it... That sent us all a clear message. And we expect these same people to raise two fingers tomorrow for any kind of access, regional, or national, to participate in creating conclusions about what happened in the past. That's why I think this is not the right time to do it. (Amor Mašović, Missing Persons Institute, BiH, National Consultation with Intellectuals, Sarajevo, BiH, November 7th 2009.)

And in the end, the convicted war crimes perpetrators, I think of those indicted by the ICTY, returned victoriously to their countries and it did not only result of political manipulation, but because that's how the public feels about them. (Zdravko Grebo, law professor, Faculty of Law, Sarajevo, BiH, National Consultation with Intellectuals, Sarajevo, BiH, November 7th 2009.)

In a small town near Sarajevo, a convicted war criminal was welcomed home at a football stadium with flags and music. Another was received in the Presidential Palace of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The third was flown home by a government plane. Therefore, I am not quite sure if the existing state structures are willing to give any significant contribution to the fact-finding process. (Josip Muselimović, lawyer, Mostar, BiH, National Consultation with Intellectuals, Sarajevo, BiH, November 7th 2009.)

The commission can significantly advance the search for the missing, but there is a fear that this commission will divert the funds donated for exhumations and identification of mortal remains.

The idea as such is extremely noble and I am quite sure that a regional or a national commission can advance the search for missing persons, it can have better access to state organs, institutions or individuals and I am sure that witnesses will speak more freely to representatives of the Humanitarian Law Center or to members of a national or regional commission than to some [national] state institutions. I am afraid that a national or regional commission could divert the funds needed for further identification of mortal remains or specific identifications because the states only dealt with exhumations so far. (Amor Mašović, Missing Persons Institute, BiH, National Consultation with Intellectuals, Sarajevo, BiH, November 7th 2009.)

Although the judgments handed down by the ICTY indicate the character and the causes of the wars waged on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, the commission will not be able to deal with the causes of these wars.

Many facts are already known and based on the judgments handed down by the ICTY, we have a pretty good idea about the causes and the character of all wars waged throughout former Yugoslavia (...), we have a glimpse at the truth about what happened (...). However, it will almost be impossible for

the members of the commission, whoever they are, to deal with the causes of the wars in the former Yugoslavia. (Amor Mašović, Missing Persons Institute, BiH, National Consultation with Intellectuals, Sarajevo, BiH, November 7th 2009.)

Public testimonies of victims will help us learn about the suffering of others.

I am in favour of public testimonies of victims. But we need to think of ways how to do it. They are what victims need. They are what we all need; all of us who still don't have a slightest idea about happened to others. So, I support that kind of approach (...). What we don't know is the truth of ordinary people, who don't have access to the media, who have no means of expressing themselves (...) although they wish to. They are not witnesses in war crimes trials; they are not capable of writing books about their suffering. All they want is to use simple language, the language typical for their culture and tell us what hurts. Well, that's what we don't have and what probably can't be obtained through war crimes trials, but I hope we can achieve it in a way presented to us by this initiative. That is what I support, but I am not raising my hopes too high. (Amor Mašović, Missing Persons Institute, BiH, National Consultation with Intellectuals, Sarajevo, BiH, November 7th 2009.)

What I think our problem is, and I don't know how to overcome it, is finding the right way to approach that segment of the institutional framework which is necessary to have in order to make this whole thing valid, considering the kind of politics we have right now. Where should we start from? In my opinion, we can't go all the way back to the history of the 18th, 19th, or the 20th century. We must start from what we have right now, the history of the last 20 years. But which is the right way to go? Public testimonies are the way to go because the public has no way of hearing victims' testimonies in any other way, but that of course requires the media to be more deeply involved and dedicated to the entire idea (...). There are numerous undeniable stories and they are rarely heard (...). The question is why am I the only person here from Banja Luka? (...) I give my support to this and so does the organization for which I work, but I don't want to be sceptical. (Lidija Živadinović, the Helsinki Parliament of Banja Luka Citizens, BiH, National Consultation with Intellectuals, Sarajevo, BiH, November 7th 2009.)

You can only defend the victims from your

community if you condemn the perpetrators in your own midst.

If it is possible to reposition a victim in this whole story and allow it to be not only a witness but a prosecutor, too, then we would be able to do something. Since there are no means to justify the crime, and since the crime can only be condemned, then the victim should be the one to condemn the crime. In other words, victims should tell the war crimes perpetrators in their own midst that they should not have defended them by committing crimes against others and that they should not go on defending themselves by claiming they did it for the victims (...). The only way you can defend your victims is by condemning the war crimes perpetrators in your own midst. (Esad Bajtal, philosopher, BiH, National Consultation with Intellectuals, Sarajevo, BiH, November 7th 2009.)

No one can deny the need to establish the facts about the past.

Fact-finding is something that is very difficult to deny as a prerequisite to be able to start a serious and honest discussion about the horrors of the wars that happened in this region. (Zdravko Grebo, law professor, Faculty of Law, Sarajevo, BiH, National Consultation with Intellectuals, Sarajevo, BiH, November 7th 2009.)

The regional approach is not only needed, it is indispensable. It opens a way to deal with crimes and our own responsibility.

If our primary task is to deal with the crimes committed directly or indirectly, it is all the same to me because we are talking about responsibility in general, then let's keep it our primary task. The only problem is that I may not be encouraged by the people I trust from Belgrade, Zagreb, Priština, or Podgorica, and this whole enterprise may turn out to look like treason and you may hear things like "if they are talking about their crimes, then we should talk about ours", right... The regional approach is not only needed, it is indispensable. (Zdravko Grebo, law professor, Faculty of Law, Sarajevo, BiH, National Consultation with Intellectuals, Sarajevo, BiH, November 7th 2009.)

We should not expect government institutions to make a huge contribution (...). It is exactly a commission like this, acting at a regional level and cooperating between nations, that may have better

results (...). (Josip Muselimović, lawyer, Mostar, BiH, National Consultation with Intellectuals, Sarajevo, BiH, November 7th 2009.)

One of the conditions for RECOM to be formed is that Serbia recognizes Kosovo, and as things are now, that will not happen in the near future. What are the options to solve that problem?

The governments that agree to form RECOM and a regional fact-finding project must recognize Priština, must recognize Kosovo and the other way around. I really don't see it happening at this moment or in the near future, Belgrade and Sarajevo recognizing Kosovo, for their different reasons. (Amor Mašović, Missing Persons Institute, BiH, National Consultation with Intellectuals, Sarajevo, BiH, November 7th 2009.)

During the debate on the creation of RECOM it is important to make sure that all participants are equally informed and then it is necessary to tell the truth about the shortcomings and the advantages of such a truth commission.

I think that at such gatherings and during consultations like this one, and I support them, make no mistake about it, and as Professor Grebo says, it is necessary to present the whole concept to those who are not so much familiar about it, tell them about the flaws and the advantages of such a truth commission and open a discussion in that direction. (Midhat Izmirlija, Faculty of Law, Sarajevo, BiH, National Consultation with Intellectuals, Sarajevo, BiH, November 7th 2009.)

The facts are our weapon to prevent any kind of manipulation of the truth.

Through the judgments handed by the Hague Tribunal it was established that all sides committed war crimes. That is indisputable, and that is very important to me. What we need to do, and I think we all agree on this is to help official institutions, first of all our judiciaries, but we also have the Missing Persons Institute and other institutions formed at the state level for that purpose. This commission has some chances to find the facts and as we like to say, open the soul of a victim or some witness and allow them to present their perspective on a particular event. And that is the really big role of the truth commission called RECOM and that is our main task. The facts will prevent anyone from manipulating the truth. (Vehid Šehić, Tuzla Citizens' Forum, BiH,

National Consultation with Intellectuals, Sarajevo, BiH, November 7th 2009.)

Individuals who were positioned high in the command chain and who were not indicted of war crimes should be invited to consultations like these and they should tell us who ordered them to commit war crimes.

It is important to invite individuals who participated in the war, who issued commands, not those indicted by the ICTY, but those who were commanders during the war and whose names never came up in the context of war crimes. They should tell us who ordered them to commit crimes and what they ordered their subordinates to do. They should also tell us why they chose to take under their wing members of the paramilitary units that committed war crimes (...). I am personally convinced that this commission should be able to do something, but only if its members can agree on important starting points. (Veljko Droca, Serbian Civic Council, BiH, National Consultation with Intellectuals, Sarajevo, BiH, November 7th 2009.)

RECOM should be mandated and obliged to work with the social environment, to make sure that the process of searching for justice and facing the truth is the need of the societies rather than the need of certain structures.

I strongly support this idea. For the last five years I have been working with victims from Srebrenica and I have an idea how this works. The judiciary hands down a judgment. The culprit is identified and victims are stigmatized once their victim status and the torture they suffered are recognized. The fact is that our young generation, and I'm talking about a region in North-eastern Bosnia where we conducted a mini-research, has been influenced in a way that guarantees that they will become warriors who will try to undo all injustices from this war. That is a fact (...). I would like to suggest that RECOM is under an obligation to work with society, to make sure the process of searching for the justice and facing the truth is the need of society rather than the need of some structures in the society. We are not going to do much if we don't approach it in this way. (Salih Rasavac, Koridor, BiH, National Consultation with Intellectuals, Sarajevo, BiH, November 7th 2009.)

It is mandatory to include religious communities in the debate on the past.

Religious communities must be included in the pro-

cess because of the huge influence they enjoy. But they must sincerely demonstrate, not just for the sake of the form, that they want to deal with the past. (Vehid Šehić, Tuzla Citizens' Forum, BiH, National Consultation with Intellectuals, Sarajevo, BiH, November 7th 2009.)

The commission should publish a selection of texts from journalists who prepared the implementation of the idea that led to the commission of the crime.

I support this initiative because regardless of how many different chapters are dealing with this problem, it is never enough because the crime is universal. RECOM should publish a selection of the most indicative texts by journalists who supported the war and helped implement the idea to commit war crimes. (Ibrahim Bušatlija, the Council of the Congress of Bosniak Intellectuals, BiH, National Consultation with Intellectuals, Sarajevo, BiH, November 7th 2009.)

The basic and logical reason to form this commission is: we have mass graves, we have victims, we have mortal remains, yet we don't have criminals and perpetrators.

And again, the basic and logical reason to form this commission: there are mass graves, there are victims, there are bodily remains, but there aren't any criminals and perpetrators. (Esad Bajtal, philosopher, BiH, National Consultation with Intellectuals, Sarajevo, BiH, November 7th 2009.)

The regional commission is important because of the register of victims which will demonstrate that "the other side" also had victims.

It was very important for me to attend this gathering because I really support this idea. I heard about it before and I have read some materials, I closely follow this thing, and that's why I am here. I think that this regional commission is very important because once we get these lists of victims many will realize that, to use their language, "the other side" had victims, too. Why am I reducing the entire idea to that? Because I come from a town where everything, including water and the air we breathe is divided. Everything is doubled in a city raising future fighters on these facts. Every institution, from day-care to university is either "their" or "our" (...). I still haven't heard a single victim say that he or she was satisfied once the sentence was handed down, even if it

was a 40 year prison sentence. Victims don't get any satisfaction out of the sentences. Everything remains the same. What continues is a feeling of emptiness and dissatisfaction, the feeling that there's no justice. (Sead Đulić, Center for Drama Education and the Young People's Theatre, Mostar, BiH, National Consultation with Intellectuals, Sarajevo, BiH, November 7th 2009.)

The biggest obstacle is an association of religion and bad politics.

This is a courageous and ethical act, worthy of respect and support – what we are trying to do here, in order to come closer to the truth and true facts. But if you ask me, the biggest challenge is to overcome the negative impact of religion combined with bad politics. Religion is today the most dangerous politics. Religion forgets its most important postulates because politics is more important. Religious communities are in fact political parties and they are being accepted by these people here. (Lazar Manojlović, professor from Bijeljina, BiH, National Consultation with Intellectuals, Sarajevo, BiH, November 7th 2009.)

National consultation with women's groups on the Initiative RECOM

**Tuzla, BiH
November 11th 2009**

The national consultation with women's groups on the Initiative RECOM in Tuzla, was organized by Vive Association of Women from Tuzla, BiH. The gathering was attended by 40 representatives of non-governmental organizations from Bosnia and Herzegovina advocating the rights of women but also dealing with the issue of women victims of war. There were two participants from Croatia and two representatives of the OSCE regional office were monitored the event. Introductory speeches were given by Vesna Teršelić (Documenta, Croatia), Aleksandra Letić (Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republika Srpska), and Teufika Ibrahimfendić (Vive Association of Women, Tuzla, BiH).

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations of participants

All governments in the region are strongly aga-

inst establishing the facts about war crimes because many of those responsible for some of these crimes are holding government positions.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, but in other post-Yugoslav states too, there is a lot of opposition to establishing the facts about war crimes and other serious human rights violations. Why? Well, I believe the reason is the fact that some people responsible for certain war crimes are members of these governments. (Amir Kulagić, Srebrenica, BiH, National consultation with women's groups on the Initiative RECOM, Tuzla, BiH, November 11th 2009.)

A list of victims accompanied by basic facts about the victims including where the victim was killed, what the victim's occupation was etc.

I am in favour of an individualized, personalized list of victims, so that we know who the victim was, what the victim's occupation was, where the victim lost his or her life, and under what circumstances. (Amir Kulagić, Srebrenica, BiH, National consultation with women's groups on the Initiative RECOM, Tuzla, BiH, November 11th 2009.)

Facts will give us a starting point to conclude the causes of the conflict. RECOM must establish the reason why there is a conflict in this region every 30, 40, 50 years during which people commit horrific crimes.

Based on the facts we establish, I believe we are going to be able to have some idea of the causes of the crises in the Balkans (...). The causes of the conflict are very important. If RECOM is unable to get some idea of the causes that brought on the whole war story (...) well, we can say we didn't do anything important (...). For us here it is very important to come to a realization about what causes a conflict in this region every 30, 40, 50 years and forces people to commit crimes. (Fikret Grabovica, Association of parents of the children killed during the siege of Sarajevo, BiH, National consultation with women's groups on the Initiative RECOM, Tuzla, BiH, November 11th 2009.)

RECOM should encompass the period preceding the war since these were the years when preparations for war were underway.

In Srebrenica, for example, three years before the war broke out some people had made roads through the woods. Why did they make roads through

the woods? They said they needed them for exporting timber. But they were just preparing for the war. They also drove away arms and ammunition belonging to the territorial defence in Srebrenica. My husband was an intellectual, he knew what it meant. He asked Savo Aleksić, Chief-of-Staff of the Srebrenica Municipality and the Chief-of-Staff of the Internal Affairs Secretariat (SUP): "Savo, what are they doing?" and he replied: "Too old, I guess. They want to bring in the new ones." However, the town was left without any means to defend itself. That meant they were preparing for the war. And we, RECOM, will have to start with these facts to be able to know why it all happened. Somebody planned these things in advance. (Kada Hotić, Mothers of Srebrenica, BiH, National consultation with women's groups on the Initiative RECOM, Tuzla, BiH, November 11th 2009.)

Victims have a need to tell their stories and they must trust the people they are talking to. They want to be listened to and they need to be understood. They need to reinstate their confidence in their own potential and dignity. That is the only way they can be empowered enough to testify in public.

Victims feel the need to talk (...) to be heard, to be understood and respected. They want to have their dignity back (...). Victims need to start believing in their own potential to be able to trust others (...). They have to believe they can do it, they have the power to do it (...). That is how we can create a document that will help us make a timeline of events.

The judiciary, as I said, is tasked with establishing the truth, but they cannot satisfy the needs of the victims. Victims need to talk if anyone will listen. We must say honestly that many people try to avoid listening to victims' stories. When we talk about public hearings of victims, we mean that victims are talking to somebody who is listening. They will not talk to a wall. They want to be heard, understood, respected, and they want their dignity back. (Teufika Ibrahimefendić (Vive Association of Women, Tuzla, BiH, National consultation with women's groups on the Initiative RECOM, Tuzla, BiH, November 11th 2009.)

All victims' stories must be heard. That means respect and not equalization of victims.

I don't want to get in the middle of what happened in Kalinovic, what happened in Konjic, what happe-

ned in Mostar, because I don't know these stories. I want to receive them with respect and not with judgment; I don't want to evaluate whose story is more horrific because all stories are different. That is the only way. That does not mean that we are making all stories equal because we know what the main issues are – Srebrenica, the beginning of the war, Kapija, Merkale Market in Sarajevo, and all other places where mass crimes happened. (Teufika Ibrahimefendić (Vive Association of Women, Tuzla, BiH, National consultation with women's groups on the Initiative RECOM, Tuzla, BiH, November 11th 2009.)

The regional commission enables us to find out the truth about the people in Srebrenica who fled to Montenegro in 1992 and who were deported from Montenegro only to disappear without a trace.

Why do we need a regional approach to establishing the facts? Well, we can't know what happened in Srebrenica – a group of people from Srebrenica, my neighbours, left for Montenegro in April 1992 (...) only to be soon afterwards deported by the Montenegro government to the so called Republika Srpska police. They were all killed. We never found out anything about them (...). So, I am asking you: how can we learn the truth about these people if we do not apply the regional approach? If we don't make the government of Montenegro open their state archives and tell us what happened and where these people were sent, those responsible for destiny will never be brought to justice. (Amir Kulagić, Srebrenica, BiH, National consultation with women's groups on the Initiative RECOM, Tuzla, BiH, November 11th 2009.)

RECOM needs to investigate the destinies of many children who became victims during the war.

We are talking about the killed, the raped, about veterans. I think it is good that the gentleman is here today because I think that RECOM really needs to investigate the destinies of many children who became victims during the war. (Rosama Milić, May 22 Association, Kapija, Tuzla BiH, National consultation with women's groups on the Initiative RECOM, Tuzla, BiH, November 11th 2009.)

The central commission should be a bridge between victims' associations and the judiciary and it should have sub-commissions with a pre-

determined information flow protocol in place.

I think that it (...) should be a central commission with a series of sub-commissions which (...) will function in accordance with a precisely defined information flow protocol (...). The central commission should be a bridge between victims' associations helping the victims of war and the judiciary (...) and also put pressure on our governments to help us solve these problems. (Aida Omeragić, Medica, Zenica, BiH, National consultation with women's groups on the Initiative RECOM, Tuzla, BiH, November 11th 2009.)

Facts about victims and war crimes will curtail the circulation of various conspiracy theories and put an end to a war crime denial culture.

It is very important to provide exact personal information about the victims and for everything else that will be within the mandate of the commission so that exact numbers can be determined. That should be done in order to (...) cut short all sorts of conspiracy theories and war crimes denial culture. (Teufika Ibrahimfendić (Vive Association of Women, Tuzla, BiH, National consultation with women's groups on the Initiative RECOM, Tuzla, BiH, November 11th 2009.)

RECOM should be made up of people other than politicians and celebrities from the field of culture, science, or sports. Members of RECOM should be anonymous persons with high moral integrity, not burdened with the heritage of the past, individuals able to look out for the best interest of everybody.

Only people other than politicians and celebrities from the area of culture, science, or sports should become members of RECOM. Members of RECOM should be anonymous persons with high moral integrity, not burdened with the heritage of the past, individuals interested in doing what's in the best interest of all parties. They must be honourable people who will not put their personal interests before the interest of others. (Edin Turić, May 25 Association of Citizens, Tuzla, BiH, National consultation with women's groups on the Initiative RECOM, Tuzla, BiH, November 11th 2009.)

I think it would be wise to come up with criteria which would be respected by all members of the commission. They should be profiled as persons with high moral integrity, unburdened with the legacy of the past. Only people fitting that profile can draw

conclusions from all this. (Fikret Grabovica, Association of parents of the children killed during the siege of Sarajevo, BiH, National consultation with women's groups on the Initiative RECOM, Tuzla, BiH, November 11th 2009.)

There are no proper system solutions in BiH for the war reparations issue. RECOM should help solve this problem.

The most frequent form of redress in BiH is government sponsored reparation system which is offered to civilian victims of war, handicapped war veterans etc (...). There are no system solutions in place (...). They approach this issue in a very limited way, it all comes down to monthly payments, compensation for physical injuries and impairment or on account of a killed or missing family member, on account of sexual abuse, rape, etc. (Teufika Ibrahimfendić (Vive Association of Women, Tuzla, BiH, National consultation with women's groups on the Initiative RECOM, Tuzla, BiH, November 11th 2009.)

May 25 Association Kapija will join the Coalition for RECOM if it is independent of political influences.

We will be glad to join the Coalition for RECOM if it is not going to be under the patronage of any political option in any of the post-Yugoslav countries. (Edin Turić, May 25 Association Kapija, Tuzla, BiH, National consultation with women's groups on the Initiative RECOM, Tuzla, BiH, November 11th 2009.)

The lack of interest in the media for this topic indicates that the state is not interested in hearing about the past. They keep sending a message that the past is best forgotten and that we should focus on economic issues.

In reality, the lack of media interest for this topic reflects the lack of interest of the state to learn about this [the past]. I think that the state simply does not want to hear about it and keeps telling us that we should forget the past and focus on economic issues. (Jasna Zečević, Vive Women, Tuzla, BiH, National consultation with women's groups on the Initiative RECOM, Tuzla, BiH, November 11th 2009.)

Special training should be organized for journalists so that they can understand the instruments of transitional justice.

Separate trainings should be offered to journalists in order to better inform them about this topic and transitional justice mechanisms. (Zorica Rokić, PAN Radio, Bijeljina, BiH, National consultation with women's groups on the Initiative RECOM, Tuzla, BiH, November 11th 2009.)

Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM

**Šabac, Serbia
November 13th 2009**

The consultation with the local community in Šabac was organized by the Youth Office of the City of Šabac (Serbia) and they were attended by 23 participants, representatives of the local self-government, municipal committees of parliamentary political parties, journalists, cultural workers, and non-governmental organizations. Speakers were Marijana Toma (Impunity Watch, Serbia) and Dragan Popović (Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia) who also moderated the discussion.

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations of the participants

RECOM will help both younger and older people understand what happened in the past.

This truth commission and the initiative around it, I think (...) will be very good for younger generations, it will help them understand what happened in the past and it will offer the real truth to those of us who are older. (Ana Lazić, Youth Office of the City of Šabac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Šabac, Serbia, November 13th 2009.)

If we fail to establish the facts, the past will haunt us forever.

Dealing with the past is a necessary process and we should start it as soon as possible because for as long as we don't know the facts, the past will haunt us. (Ivan Dasković, Inter-Municipal Historic Archive, Šabac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Šabac, Serbia, November 13th 2009.)

The commission should gather the facts about the destiny of the missing.

From a technical point of view it is a lot of work but I think that the facts about the destiny of the missing and the number of the missing should be established no matter what (...) and it is important that the right operational approach is chosen (...). (Đorđe Radović, Rotary Club, Šabac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Šabac, Serbia, November 13th 2009.)

Conflicts in BiH, Croatia, and in Kosovo are specific and they cannot be considered in the same context.

It is not the same, the conflict on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, what happened between the Serbs and the Bosniaks, and what happened between the Serbs and the Albanians. In a way, that is a bilateral topic, and it is the responsibility of all nations, organizations, and individuals to deal with each of these conflicts individually... because they are all specific in their nature. (Đorđe Radović, Rotary Club, Šabac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Šabac, Serbia, November 13th 2009.)

Victims should receive satisfaction which should lead to reconciliation.

I think that the most important issue for victims is satisfaction which will speed up the reconciliation process and help normalize life in this region. (Marića Lazarević, Liberal Democratic Party, Šabac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Šabac, Serbia, November 13th 2009.)

Reconciliation is a lengthy process and depends on those who are still searching for the remains of their loved ones.

I'd say that reconciliation is a lengthy process and it does not depend only on those of us who are in favour of it but also on those who are victims and who are still searching for their loved ones and who want to be able to give them a proper resting place. (Ksenija Pantić, Liberal Democratic Party, Šabac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Šabac, Serbia, November 13th 2009.)

In order to achieve reconciliation, it is necessary to find out the causes of the conflict.

If we are talking about reconciliation among the

warring nations, so to speak, we must first find out what the nature of the conflict was. (Živana Lazarević, Youth Initiative Šabac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Šabac, Serbia, November 13th 2009.)

The only way we can have closure is to admit that a member of “my” nation committed a war crime.

The only right way to deal with it and have closure is to have your opinion about these events and say “yes, that crime was committed by a member of my nation, I strongly condemn it and it should never happen again. I feel awful that it was done by the members of my nation, but I would also condemn it if it was done by other people.” (Đorđe Radović, Rotary Club, Šabac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Šabac, Serbia, November 13th 2009.)

Granting amnesty to war crimes perpetrators who want to talk about their crimes is a way to discover most horrific crimes.

Amnesty is a good idea because it may actually encourage (...) some war crimes perpetrators to come forward and tell what they know about some of the most horrific crimes (...) so that these crimes can be also processed in a court of law. (Ivan Dosković, Inter-Municipal Historic Archive, Šabac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Šabac, Serbia, November 13th 2009.)

We are not able to reach a consensus on the amnesty issue in the region.

We have enough evidence already without bringing these criminals here to testify, so we don't have to talk about amnesty, but if we don't have enough evidence, then it may be a good way to collect more information (...). It is going to be difficult to reach a consensus about it on a broader level when I am unable to figure it out in my own head. (Ivan Čosić, Liberal Democratic Party, Šabac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Šabac, Serbia, November 13th 2009.)

The only way to prevent relativization of war crimes is to establish the facts and have perpetrators admit their crimes.

It is important to raise awareness among the peo-

ple to start fighting the relativization of war crimes (...) and it will be best achieved by establishing the facts and by having perpetrators admit the crimes they committed. (Ivan Dosković, Inter-Municipal Historic Archive, Šabac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Šabac, Serbia, November 13th 2009.)

Morally speaking, it is not a good idea for RECOM to make a list of war crimes perpetrators because everyone is innocent until proven guilty.

RECOM should not make lists of war crimes perpetrators as it will go against the basic judicial premise that everyone is innocent until proven guilty. It would be like an act of proscription. (Ivan Dosković, Inter-Municipal Historic Archive, Šabac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Šabac, Serbia, November 13th 2009.)

RECOM should investigate the events from the period 1991-2000.

The time frame for the investigation undertaken by RECOM should be 1991-2000, mid 1999 or until 2000. (Ivan Dosković, Inter-Municipal Historic Archive, Šabac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Šabac, Serbia, November 13th 2009.)

Documentation collected by RECOM should be used by the judiciary.

When speaking about processing war crimes, it is important that the facts collected by RECOM are used by the judiciary in order to establish the responsibility for all war crimes. (Ivan Dosković, Inter-Municipal Historic Archive, Šabac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Šabac, Serbia, November 13th 2009.)

The existence of a political will in Serbia to create RECOM is doubtful. Non-governmental organizations should lead the campaign for RECOM.

I think that there is no political will in Serbia to support this idea and I also think that RECOM can only be successful if it enjoys unwavering political support - the support of the government. Non-governmental organizations supporting RECOM should do more

to create a positive image and to present this project in public. (Milan Nikolić, G17 Plus, Šabac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Šabac, Serbia, November 13th 2009.)

All of us here have the best intentions, but (...) and I don't mean to offend anyone here, in reality, there is very little we can do without adequate political support which is ostensibly missing in our society. (Dušan Kostadinović, Democratic Youth of the Democratic Party, Šabac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Šabac, Serbia, November 13th 2009.)

All countries in the region bear the burden of our recent past: are they going to be willing to create RECOM?

The entire territory of the former Yugoslavia is carrying the same burden, the burden of the recent past and everybody is having a hard time dealing with the past. I think that all these societies are lacking the political will to create such a commission and to allow it do its job. (Ivan Dosković, Inter-Municipal Historic Archive, Šabac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Šabac, Serbia, November 13th 2009.)

It is necessary to create a regional TV station or provide a time slot on all national TV stations to air public testimonies of victims so that the public can hear them.

We should either form a regional TV station which will air victims' testimonies or designate a time slot on national TV stations in which these testimonies will be aired so that the public can have a unique picture and so that citizens of all post-Yugoslav countries can have the same input about these testimonies. (Ivan Dosković, Inter-Municipal Historic Archive, Šabac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Šabac, Serbia, November 13th 2009.)

The headquarters of RECOM should be in BiH because a vast majority of crimes happened there.

When speaking about the decentralization of RECOM, I think that RECOM headquarters should be located in BiH because a vast majority of crimes happened there and that is where most of our activity is going to be concentrated. (Marica Lazarević,

Liberal Democratic Party, Šabac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Šabac, Serbia, November 13th 2009.)

Members of the commission should only be from the region but it is reasonable to fear that it may fall apart for that same reason.

The commission, I think, should not have any out-of-the-region members simply because it would be complicated to make a selection. Rather it should just have representatives of the nations that participated in the war, so that they can slowly start talking about what happened. I am afraid that RECOM may also fall apart just like the former Yugoslavia did. Maybe members from other countries should be in charge of supervising the commission so it does not fall apart. (Dušan Višnjić, Youth Office of the City of Šabac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Šabac, Serbia, November 13th 2009.)

RECOM should investigate the events in Slovenia and Macedonia.

I think that RECOM should deal with the events in Slovenia and Macedonia. (Dušan Višnjić, Youth Office of the City of Šabac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Šabac, Serbia, November 13th 2009.)

RECOM should secure psychological support for victims and perpetrators who want to cooperate with the commission. This may be a way to obtain more information about the crimes.

In fact, RECOM should be an organization that offers support to victims and any individuals who directly or indirectly took part in war operations (...). We should try to come to some sort of understanding with them. (Milan Nikolić, G17 Plus, Šabac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Šabac, Serbia, November 13th 2009.)

In order to implement the goals and the results of the process it is necessary to have the support of the European Union and of the international community in general.

The European Union can exert all kinds of pressure in different places and this whole process will be a lot more successful with that kind of support. (Marica Lazarević, Liberal Democratic Party, Šabac,

Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Šabac, Serbia, November 13th 2009.)

Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM

**Vlasenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina
November 14th 2009**

Consultation with the local community in Vlasenica was organized by the Vlasenica 92-95 Association of Victims' Families (BiH) in cooperation with the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republika Srpska (BiH). The gathering was attended 57 participants representatives of victims' families associations from Vlasenica, Milići, Bratunac, Hadžić, Zvornik, and Vogošće, representatives of the local community, Municipal Assembly member of the Municipality of Vlasenica, Chief-of-Staff of the Municipality Vlasenica and Municipality of Milići. Speakers were Admir Kulaglič (from Srebrenica, BiH), Dževad Bektašević (Vlasenica 92-95 Association of Victims' Families, BiH), and Aleksandra Letić (Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in RS, BiH). The discussion was moderated by Hazim Mujčinović (Vlasenica 92-95 Association of Victims' Families (BiH)).

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations of participants

The facts must be investigated and experiences must be told and recorded in order to serve as a reminder to future generations.

Victims of torture and rape, families who lost their loved ones, everything they suffered and lost, they can never forget it because they live their lives with that pain, with these thoughts and secrets (...). But if these facts cannot be in any way removed or forgotten, then they have to be investigated, established, and documented; they must be interpreted in an objective and honest way (...). Experiences must be told and recorded in order to serve as a reminder to future generations so that they don't have to experience what we have experienced. (Amir Kulaglič from Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Vlasenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 14th 2009.)

RECOM can only be successful if it is free from all kinds of political influence.

Politicians in power in Bosnia and Herzegovina are very deft in manipulating (...) their own people (...). This regional commission is a good idea, but it will only be successful if it is completely void of all sorts of political influences. (Mladen Popović, Chief-of-Staff of the Vlasenica Municipal Assembly, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Vlasenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 14th 2009.)

Victims expect the commission to solve the issue of missing persons as soon as possible so that they can give them a proper burial and tell the whole world why it happened and who initiated it.

What we want is to find all the missing so that we can give them a proper burial. Also, we want the perpetrators to be identified and punished (...). We all want to show the world why it all happened and who initiated it. (Alija Dautović, Vlasenica 92-95 Association of Victims' Families, Tuzla, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Vlasenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 14th 2009.)

I buried my parents and my pain is agonizing, but believe me, it would be a relief only to know why they were killed. And that is the only relief many victims of the war may have (...). My family has been living in Vlasenica for a long time and I would really want to know why my parents had to be killed. (Temima Begović, Vlasenica 92-95 Association of Victims' Families, Tuzla, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Vlasenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 14th 2009.)

RECOM should cooperate with government institutions which are creating records and it should also set up victim data bases.

One very important issue when it comes to RECOM is that we cannot go past government, municipality, or entity institutions (...). There are institutions and bodies dealing with this problem, making these lists, and setting up data bases of victims. (Ahmet Grahić, Association of Bosniak Associations of the Missing, Sarajevo, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Vlasenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 14th 2009.)

The commission must not grant amnesty but it should give a recommendation to commute sentences for those perpetrators who give confidential information on mass graves.

I personally don't approve of the idea to give amnesty to war crimes criminals, but I am in favour of some sort of sentence reduction for those who are willing to disclose privileged information about the victims, about mass graves, and mortal remains. That's an idea I can condone. (Amir Kulagić, Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Vlasenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 14th 2009.)

Victims cannot be equalled with veterans who lost their lives fighting.

Most people don't agree on the definition of a victim. Veterans who lost their lives fighting cannot be considered victims. There is a difference in cases of mass execution and those who were killed in action. I wish my brother had died in a battlefield instead of being executed blindfolded with his hands tied behind his back. (Ahmet Grahić, Association of Bosniak Associations of the Missing, Sarajevo, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Vlasenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 14th 2009.)

The goal of RECOM should be to use the facts in order to influence the education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Since the end of the war we have produced four generations of students from elementary school to university students. That is thousands of our children who studied history from three different history text books (...). It would make me very happy if the facts established by RECOM can make their way into our history books. (Ahmet Grahić, Association of Bosniak Associations of the Missing, Sarajevo, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Vlasenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 14th 2009.)

We will make a first step forward when the victims start talking about what happened to them and when the criminals are held responsible for their acts.

It is my opinion that only a dialogue of victims' family members can lead to truth (...). All political dialogues should be forgotten (...) and it [dialogue of

victims' family members] should be done in a way that guarantees the security of the victims who want to testify (...) for many victims are afraid to come forward and talk about what happened to them (...). And once victims are interviewed we can put pressure on prosecutors to put the criminals where they belong. That will be a step forward. (Kadefa Rizvanović, Association of Women of Podrinje, Bratunac, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Vlasenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 14th 2009.)

RECOM will be successful even if only one victim is found and one perpetrator punished.

For that reason I would like to support this whole initiative and I am grateful that (...) we can offer at least some satisfaction to victims and if this initiative and this program help us find only one victim and help us identify and punish one criminal, it will be successful. (Alija Dautović, Vlasenica 92-95 Association of Victims' Families, Tuzla, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Vlasenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 14th 2009.)

Young people born during the war have very radical views which can help create a new space for new conflicts. Therefore, it is necessary to establish the fact and stop interpreting the past arbitrarily.

What can be quite discouraging in certain situation is the fact that young people who were two or three years old during the war, are quite radicalized and have more extreme views than those who took part in the conflict on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. That can definitely create a new space for a new conflict. And the only way to put an end to it is to stop interpreting the past arbitrarily, in a manner that suits best our ethnic interests. We need to lay down the facts and create an authentic record, a truthful record of what happened, chronologically, and give these events the name they deserve. (Aleksandar Letić, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republika Srpska, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Vlasenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 14th 2009.)

Victims' families should be included in the process and asked whether they want the commission and what kind of commission they prefer and what its mandate should be.

Victims' families (...), we should be included in the process because our word and our strategy must be heard, it must be told in public and this is an opportunity (...). We should not allow others to talk about us, we should speak for ourselves and we should say what kind of commission, if any, we want. We need to set its goals or its mandate and everything that needs to be done. (Mevludin Lupić, Association of the families of detention camp inmates and the families of the missing of the Zvornik municipality, Zvornik, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Vlasenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 14th 2009.)

The Report of RECOM should be a legally binding document for all governments on the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

The end result of the entire work of RECOM should be a document, a report that's legally binding (...) for all governments on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. (Alija Dautović, Vlasenica 92-95 Association of Victims' Families, Tuzla, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Vlasenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 14th 2009.)

All governments taking part in the creation of RECOM should provide the funds for its functioning.

RECOM should be financed by the governments of post-Yugoslav states taking part in this project. (Alija Dautović, Vlasenica 92-95 Association of Victims' Families, Tuzla, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Vlasenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 14th 2009.)

Members of the commission should be honest and trustworthy people who will easily gain respect and command authority across the region. Members of the commission can be victims, too. Politicians must not be members of the commission.

RECOM commissioners must not be active politicians (...) and all commissioners must be honourable, trustworthy persons commanding authority and enjoying respect all over the region. Victims can also be RECOM commissioners. Why? Well, because they can set the right tone and help RECOM efforts to find the truth. (Amir Kulagić, Srebrenica, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Vlasenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 14th 2009.)

National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
November 21st 2009

The national consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM was organized by the *BH Journalist Association*. The gathering was attended by 43 participants, members of various NGOs from all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Dženana Karup-Druško (*BH Journalist Association*, BiH), Nataša Kandić (Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia), and Aleksandra Letić (Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republika Srpska) informed the participants about the Initiative for RECOM.

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations of the participants

War crimes were committed all over the territory of the former Yugoslavia. For that reason it is important to have a regional commission.

I would really like to see us compile a comprehensive document listing all crimes committed in BiH for one of our upcoming meetings so that we can get an idea of the scope of the research we need to do (...). And the attack in Bijeljina resulted in the killing of a large number of Albanians living in BiH and that was done purposefully, to kill the Albanians and then explain it as an attack of Albanian irredentists. The bodies of the Albanian victims were secretly driven and buried in Kosovo and in Macedonia. And look at this situation now, those who did it came from another country and most of them returned home after they completed their task. The remains of the victims are in several countries and we are unable to do anything about it if we act locally or on the state level. And that is why the organization I represent chose to support this regional approach. (Salem Čorbo, Return and Sustainable Living Association of Citizens, Bijeljina, BiH, National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 21st 2009.)

The commission should deal with the facts about where, under what circumstances, and how each victim individually suffered. Looking for causes takes us back to ethnic communities.

I think that this commission should deal with facts

explaining where, under what circumstances, and how each victim suffered individually. If we start interpreting the facts or searching for reasons why things happened, I think we will be doomed to end up in our ethnic trenches. (Nedžad Horozović, Center for Non-Violent Action, Sarajevo, BiH, National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 21st 2009.)

Association of the families of missing civilians and veterans of the Semberia region support the Initiative for RECOM and they will join the Coalition for RECOM if the commission is determined to treat all victims equally.

I apologize to all, but I have to tell you the opinion of the members of my Association: I was sent here to meet with you [talking to Nataša Kandić] as the person in charge of the campaign to create RECOM and ask you to address the members of my Association explaining all this and to sign the admission statement to join RECOM. And my duty here is just to say that, and of course, to tell you that we want all victims to be accepted and treated equally, just like you said, all victims must be treated equally and everything must be known. (Smilja Mitrović, Association of the families of missing civilians and veterans of Semberija, Bijeljina, BiH, National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 21st 2009.)

Reconciliation as a societal need is indispensable in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I take into consideration the fact that reconciliation is a private and individual thing and that we cannot force people to forgive or reconcile with someone, but I simply think that reconciliation as a societal process is very badly needed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. (Nedžad Horozović, Center for Non-Violent Action, Sarajevo, BiH, National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 21st 2009.)

Mothers from Srebrenica are offended by the word “reconciliation”

I will say first of all, on behalf the Movement of the Mothers of Srebrenica and Žepa Enclaves Association that we salute all commissions, not only this one, but every commission in Bosnia and Herzegovina or

elsewhere because it is always better to do something than to do nothing. We understand that dialogue is needed, but I must tell you that at this moment I am offended by the word “reconciliation”. I intimately know whether I can forgive somebody, whether I will be able to forget, but on behalf of thousands of mothers I cannot decide (...) whether they will be able to forgive or forget. So, I don't want this commission to mention the word “reconciliation”. (Munira Šubašić, Movement of the Mothers of Srebrenica and Žepa Enclaves Association, Sarajevo, BiH, National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 21st 2009.)

All victims must have a first and last name and for that reason it is indispensable to create a data base on the missing, died and killed.

We need a data base of all victims. Even 14 years after the conflict, we don't have a data base of missing persons. We definitely must have a data base because then nobody will be able to play with the numbers of the killed and the missing. But this data base must be correct. I support the work of Mirsad Tokača and others, but that was not enough. We need to go further because we don't want our children to be just numbers, they have to have names. In order to really do that, we must go door to door, town to town, village to village (...). That is the only way to find out how many persons are missing, from all three ethnic groups. But I think that the disappearance of each child is a pain for the child's mother and no one else. (Munira Šubašić, Movement of the Mothers of Srebrenica and Žepa Enclaves Association, Sarajevo, BiH, National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 21st 2009.)

Victims need to talk about their pain and suffering and they need to be listened to.

It is so obvious to me that the people who personally or through their loved ones suffered great tragedies, injustices, violence etc. need to talk about their suffering. They need to say what happened and they want to be listened to. (Nedžad Horozović, Center for Non-Violent Action, Sarajevo, BiH, National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 21st 2009.)

It is necessary to start talking about the crimes

committed against mentally ill persons. Some of them are lost without a trace.

I don't want to repeat myself, but we forgot a whole group of citizens, a marginalized group of citizens – the mentally ill persons who were victims of war crimes. As far as I know, and there is no available data because there is no research about it, many mentally ill persons are unaccounted for, regardless of whether they were institutionalized or stayed at home, and many became victims of various war crimes (...). I want to know how we can solve this problem and start talking about it. It is clear that even if they want to, they are probably afraid to talk. (Vahid Đulović, Fenix, Tuzla, BiH, National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 21st 2009.)

Some participants are afraid that parliaments will not accept the initiative to create RECOM.

Let me say, first of all, that I fully support this idea. We have been dealing with this topic since 2001 through various research activities. But the most urgent issue bothering me is how we can influence parliaments to accept this Initiative. (Goran Bubalo, TERCA, section of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Council of Non-governmental organizations – BHVNVO, Sarajevo, BiH, National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 21st 2009.)

The Coalition for RECOM should monitor RECOM's activities.

I can tell you right now on behalf of the Center for the promotion of civil society that we will fully support the Commission (...). One of the mechanisms that this Commission needs is a monitoring mechanism, or maybe that word is too strong – when governments found some bodies, they don't like the word 'monitoring' anywhere near their bodies. However, I think that this Coalition for RECOM should be used to generate a number of various organizations, 10, 50, or 100, which will represent a counselling or a monitoring body, a partnership if you will, so that this body can represent this Coalition but at the same time some sort of a partner in charge of pressuring and mobilizing parts of the civil society (...) so, this Commission should have a partner in the Coalition and in the body which will be generated by the Coalition which will monitor, navigate,

and negotiate with the commission, be a partner in this whole process. (Šefko Bajić, Center for the promotion of the civil society, Sarajevo, BiH, National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 21st 2009.)

Members of RECOM must be prejudice-free and able to resist influences of various political parties.

I think that a lot of groundwork must be done before the commission is founded and members of the commission must be people who are prejudice-free and able to withstand influences produced by political parties, especially the nationalist ones, because the nationalistic rhetoric brought us where we are today. (Fadila Hadžić, La Strada, Mostar, BiH, National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 21st 2009.)

Non-governmental organizations, members of the Coalition for RECOM should be organized in sectors in order to give their best contribution to the creation of the Commission.

If each and every one of us here considers the mission of our organizations, we will realize that our organizations are moving toward the realization of RECOM's goals. Well, the question now is how to implement that. Maybe the best way is to organize the Coalition for RECOM in sectors, according to their missions so that we can act within our missions and contribute to the realization of set goals. (Salih Rasavac, Koridor, Sarajevo, BiH, National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 21st 2009.)

The Initiative for RECOM should be discussed within local communities so that citizens, victims, and refugees alike can give their opinions.

I would like these consultations to be held in smaller places so that they can be visited by ordinary people, victims, and refugees who can take an active part in the consultations process. (Svetlana Vuković, Luna, Rudo, BiH, National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 21st 2009.)

The Coalition for RECOM should lobby for the

adoption of a law on the creation of the commission. Non-governmental organizations network and their infrastructure should be used for lobbying.

I think that one of the goals of the program part of the Coalition should be lobbying for the adoption of a law which will clearly define the goals and the purpose of the creation of the Commission and which will envisage the involvement of civil society organizations into the process from the very beginning. I agree with Mrs. Kandić that this is an open process, there are no ready-made solutions and that this is not a process going from the top down but on the contrary, from a grass-roots consultations process. And as Mr. Ševko said, we should use the existing infrastructure and make the most of it. (Milena Savić, Center for Info-Legal Support, Zvornik, BiH, National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 21st 2009.)

The Coalition must have a strategy in place in case the governments in the region reject the Initiative for RECOM.

Some experiences show that the non-governmental sector can do something – register the victims. The Research and Documentation Center proved that, the Humanitarian Law Center is showing us that, and very simply, the work we are putting in here should be put to a good use and not wasted until the spring of 2011. So, we should know what we can do with the capacity we have ourselves in case the governments in the region decide not to support this idea. (Sinan Alić, Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Foundation, Tuzla, BiH, National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 21st 2009.)

It is necessary to create a Regional Media Center which will control all information pertaining to the Initiative for RECOM.

I have a question: are minorities going to be included in the consultations process? I am thinking of Roma people, Jewish people and so on. And what I want to say as a professional, as a journalist is that we should create a regional media centre for exchanging information pertaining to our activities so that at all times we know what is going on in Croatia, in Serbia, or in BiH and Kosovo with respect

to the activity of the Coalition. So, a regional media centre. (Dalibor Tanić, Youth Initiative for Human Rights in BiH, Sarajevo, BiH, National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 21st 2009.)

Various unions should be included in the consultations process.

I worked for a long time for a union here in the region and I can tell you that there is potential for what RECOM will do, so I would like to know how you intend to include unions, especially when talking about the time of war and serious work-related human rights violations, cases of forced labour and illegal employment terminations. Unions have a large number of members and they can give a serious contribution to this process. (Emina Abraham-Stoter, SIPU International, Sarajevo, BiH, National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 21st 2009.)

The bottom-up as opposed to the top-down approach guarantees the success of this initiative.

And I say that I like the 'bottom-up' approach because in our world everything is up-side-down and I think that's often the reason why so many things fail. (Emina Abraham-Stoter, SIPU International, Sarajevo, BiH, National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 21st 2009.)

It is necessary to make an overview of all suggestions for the mandate of RECOM made in the up-to-date consultations process.

I would like to see a list of topics to be debated within the mandate of RECOM in Bosnia and Herzegovina for our next consultation session. (Salem Čorbo, Return and Sustainable Living Association of Citizens, Bijeljina, BiH, National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 21st 2009.)

What I would like to do is to see a proposed model, a draft. This is the seventh time I have attended a consultation and I will not come again unless you tell me there is a proposed model for us to review. (Edin Ramulić, Izvor, Women from Prijedor Asso-

ciation, Prijedor, BiH, National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 21st 2009.)

We need to include religious and academic communities. The Coalition for RECOM is an opportunity to overcome divisions and conflicts within government structures.

This whole concept should be extended to other societal structures, not just the civil society. I mean primarily religious and academic communities. However, they are also deeply divided. I see this Coalition for RECOM as an opportunity to overcome the existing conflicts in the government and government structures. (Jovan Divjak, Education Builds BiH, Sarajevo, BiH, National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 21st 2009.)

Everything needs to be done for the sake of young people so that they can accept, understand, and forgive.

There are still many people searching for their parents even after 17 years. We have students who were not able to give a proper burial to their parents, children who never knew their parents. Everything we do should be done for the sake of young people so that they are able to accept, understand and simply forgive, just like Mrs. Subašić said. (Jovan Divjak, Education Builds BiH, Sarajevo, BiH, National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 21st 2009.)

The mandate of this commission must be clear and precise, so that the commission does not disappoint some categories of victims.

I think that the mandate of the commission should be narrowed and that we should decide what precisely the Commission is going to be mandated to do. There are two reasons for that; we don't want to disappoint some categories of victims and it is obvious that this commission will not be able to address all crimes committed during the conflict. (Muhammed Džemidžić, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Sarajevo, BiH, National consultation with non-governmental organizations on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 21st 2009.)

Consultation with the local community

**Zrenjanin, Serbia
November 28th 2009**

The consultation was organized by the Kikinda Club and the Women's Support Center from Kikinda, in cooperation with the Zrenjanin Education Center. Twenty-eight representatives of the local self-government, political parties, student parliaments, non-governmental organizations, associations of veterans and war invalids, all from the territory of the Zrenjanin municipality attended the gathering. Dragan Popović (Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Serbia) monitored the consultations. Miomirka Mila Melank (the Kikinda Club, Serbia) and Mirjana Ivančević (Education Center Zrenjanin, Serbia) opened the debate by disclosing their personal motives for getting involved with the Coalition for RECOM. Marija Srdić (Women's Support Center, Serbia) talked about the *Why RECOM* issue. Nataša Kandić (Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia) informed the participants about the suggestions, opinions, and recommendations of the participants from previous consultations and Maja Stojanović (Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Serbia) spoke about selected positive experiences of various truth-commissions from around the world. The discussion was moderated by Maja Srdić (Women's Support Center, Serbia).

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations

The Initiative for RECOM leads to reconciliation and integration into the European Union. What caused the war is a separate story.

(...) I fully support this project and I am ready to give my contribution, not by working in the Commission but by working in preparing the field, trying to help this happen because this can bring reconciliation among, it can help the European Union recognize us as a country where normal people live and not some barbarians, and it can also help us better understand Europe. I should not talk about the causes that led to the war. (Milan Milivojević, Association of Veterans and War Invalids of the Wars of the 1990s, Zrenjanin, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Zrenjanin, Serbia, November 28th 2009.)

(...) This could have multiple beneficial effects for all generations in the region, and we can serve as

an example of a country that did it. (Milan Milivojević, Association of Veterans and War Invalids of the Wars of the 1990s, Zrenjanin, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Zrenjanin, Serbia, November 28th 2009.)

If something similar had been done after the second world war, many of these crimes would not have been repeated. That is why it is very important that it is done properly.

If such a debate had been conducted regarding war crimes committed during the second world war, if we had earlier known what had happened in Jasenovac, this would not have happened, it would not have been repeated. So, let's not make the same mistake now and let's try to do it thoroughly this time. (Milan Milivojević, Association of Veterans and War Invalids of the Wars of the 1990s, Zrenjanin, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Zrenjanin, Serbia, November 28th 2009.)

Veterans from Serbia expect RECOM to tell others it knows about the crimes they committed. Only if they, too, take an active part in the truth-telling process we will have an opportunity to establish the facts and build them into our culture and customs.

Through these examples (...) RECOM will have an opportunity to give its contribution to making all of us willingly accept the initiative, to let other people know we know about the crimes they committed on their side in order to be more successful, in order to attract a larger number of people take part in this, and in order to motivate more people to give their testimonies and help create not only the data base but more importantly help establish the facts and, as somebody here said, build it in our customs and culture. (Milan Milivojević, Association of Veterans and War Invalids of the Wars of the 1990s, Zrenjanin, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Zrenjanin, Serbia, November 28th 2009.)

The debate should include war commanders – there are plenty of those who are honourable men. Political parties and members of Parliaments should also be included.

(...)What I would like to suggest is to invite those war commanders who took an active part in the war. I am one of those people who can go anywhere because I have done nothing wrong and I don't have anything to hide, and I know there are many like me,

honourable people who acted like honourable soldiers and whose motives to go to war were nothing but pure. I can name a couple of political parties which would certainly like to be involved in this project... But, in any event, it is not a bad idea to have representatives of our municipalities and parliaments, to invite some representatives from our respective parliaments to sit here and listen to what we have to say and show them that's what we are fighting for. (Milan Milivojević, Association of Veterans and War Invalids of the Wars of the 1990s, Zrenjanin, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Zrenjanin, Serbia, November 28th 2009.)

If the creation of RECOM depends on financial support of the governments in the region, that commission will never be founded, primarily because the states do not want war crimes to be discussed publicly.

In that case, [the states in the region are expected to provide financial support for the creation of RECOM] I think that the entire initiative is doomed just like many before it. That is what I think. And the reason I'm convinced that will happen is because these states, had they wanted to, would have invested in such a project a long time ago and made some progress in this area. (Danilo Babić, Association of Army War Invalids, Consultation with the local community, Zrenjanin, Serbia, November 28th 2009.)

Our countries, each one of them, showed us clearly that this topic is something they don't want to discuss. The state interest is not to talk and not to disclose war crimes. (Zlatko Jelisavac, a citizen from Zrenjanin, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Zrenjanin, Serbia, November 28th 2009.)

In the dealing with the past process we should start with introspection. From other people to ourselves.

We need to recognize other people's pain, but in order to do that we have to start from the things that caused pain and suffering of others and which was done by us or on our behalf, so, it is very important to initiate introspection so that we can understand where we are hurting. (Sanja Milosavljević, Women's Forum of the League of the Social-Democrats of Vojvodina, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Zrenjanin, Serbia, November 28th 2009.)

Refugees are victims and they are entitled to a dignified life. People empathised with them when they first arrived, but later on they were condemned for coming here.

Even today they are unhappy deep down because they feel trapped here and they never wanted to be here in the first place. And the people who accepted them when they first came here partially empathized with them and partially condemned them for coming here because they came uninvited and took their jobs. The refugees are hurting because of the fact that their situation is not taken into consideration and discussed seriously and they are simply no longer considered as persecuted and displaced but as living a dignified life, which, of course, is not true. Wherever it is they are living, whether they like that place or not, they should be offered a chance at a normal life. (Sanja Milosavljević, Women's Forum of the League of the Social-Democrats of Vojvodina, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Zrenjanin, Serbia, November 28th 2009.)

Local media outlets will support the initiative but there is very little we know about it. Members of the Coalition for RECOM at the local level should better inform the media about it.

There are certain media outlets here who expressed an interest in this initiative. Let's get involved in the work of the media as much as we can. I think that Santos or the KTV will give us the necessary support if we are actively involved in this... This is the very beginning and very few people at all know about it. This is an extremely useful project for the future of this region, not only for the future of Serbia, but equally for all the countries in the region. (Milan Milivojević, Association of Veterans and War Invalids of the Wars of the 1990s, Zrenjanin, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Zrenjanin, Serbia, November 28th 2009.)

(We need) to meet and plan a visit to these TV stations to explain to them in a very direct manner the entire initiative, and to use this material which is quite understandable, and visit municipality after municipality. And if we do that, I think we can successfully present the importance of RECOM to the public. (Milan Milivojević, Association of Veterans and War Invalids of the Wars of the 1990s, Zrenjanin, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Zrenjanin, Serbia, November 28th 2009.)

Young people in Zrenjanin are not familiar with

this initiative. Our high schools don't offer their students any courses that tackle the issue of the wars of the 1990s. History teachers avoid the subject and the curriculum for civic education classes is designed by individual instructors.

We have an insight into how much young people in our region know, or rather how much they don't know and how badly they are misled by ideas forced onto them by other people. I don't know, leaders in our community who wish to manipulate young people and it is good that the truth comes out finally, because there can only be one truth and it cannot be up to each nation to have their own history regardless of the others – there is only one history. (Jasna Janošev, "Maštalište" Youth and Child Center, Zrenjanin, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Zrenjanin, Serbia, November 28th 2009.)

Members of regular armies and the police bear the burden of crime of the paramilitaries. RECOM can help them rectify that.

Let's consider the Croatian war zone as an example. How many different paramilitary formations did we have there? And we suffer the consequences of their acts, on both sides of the front line. And we are being charged with whatever it is that they did in that war zone and all other war zones on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. (Žarko Beštanski, Consultation with the local community, Zrenjanin, Serbia, November 28th 2009.)

RECOM should support the need of war veterans to be rehabilitated.

The problem I see here is that a large number of veterans have no access to medical care. They don't know how to apply for help and support. Now, I understand that is not part of RECOM's mandate, but it is certainly one of the things we can influence, just like we are influencing states to support the Initiative for RECOM. There are very few centres throughout Serbia where war veterans can get any kind of help. I personally associate it with the fact that there are many people who are sick and who stay at home, trying to resolve their issues and traumas by abusing alcohol or other substances, which increases the number of domestic violence cases and creates a generation of young people living in broken families in which children get beaten and neglected. Simply speaking, it is a huge problem, it is like having an elephant in the living room that nobody pays atten-

tion to. (Danijela Jelisavac, a concerned citizen, Zrenjanin, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Zrenjanin, Serbia, November 28th 2009.)

Religious organizations and communities are victims, too, and they have a responsibility and a role in everything that happened in the past.

So, religions and religious communities are also victims because so many mosques have been destroyed and so many churches and monasteries... and on the other hand, they need to be included because we need their feedback about their role and their responsibility for the things that happened in the past. That is a slippery road, when somebody is a victim but at the same time expected to be self-critical with respect to the role of his or her own religious community for the events of the past. (Nataša Kandić, Humanitarian Law Centre, Belgrade, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Zrenjanin, Serbia, November 28th 2009.)

Building joint memorials in places of war crimes locations and detention places is the best way to prevent the repetition of crimes.

If RECOM is able to do it, chronologically list all locations where crimes were committed from January 1991, and if we are able to mark all these places, we will create a memory map. I am quite confident that by doing it, we will create the most powerful tool to fight the recurrence of such crimes in the future. (Nataša Kandić, Humanitarian Law Centre, Belgrade, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Zrenjanin, Serbia, November 28th 2009.)

It is in the best interest of truth to apply international standards for the classification of places of detention, so that we can differentiate between detention camps, collection centres, prisons, and concentration camps.

Let's once and for all finally clarify what exactly happened in Stajićevo and Begejci. That is why we need to work together, regardless of what side we are on. Let's finally establish what exactly happened. If you really think, if you have evidence, solid evidence that it was a collection centre or a military prison, you should say it to this Commission which is a government organization where you can convey relevant facts and that's the end of it. (Zlatko Jelisavac, a concerned citizen from Zrenjanin, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Zrenjanin, Serbia, November 28th 2009.)

Every public testimony must be double-checked from several independent sources.

When somebody comes to testify about a crime or says that he or she took an active part in something or that they were in some way abused, how do we determine whether these persons are really who they say they are. (Aleksandra Mladenović, Municipal Committee of the Liberal Democratic Party in Zrenjanin, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Zrenjanin, Serbia, November 28th 2009.)

Each testimony must be double-checked from two or three independent sources so that we do not allow people to give us incorrect information. (Nataša Kandić, Humanitarian Law Centre, Belgrade, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Zrenjanin, Serbia, November 28th 2009.)

Collecting signatures for RECOM must be organized on a local level by using local community offices. War veterans will take part in this.

And in the end you say we need one million signatures for RECOM. I think that Serbia alone should be able to yield one million signatures. If that's not the case, then we are not going to do much. Let's be active in all municipalities and organize the signature collection campaign properly. Many of us will be willing to accept this responsibility once we realize what it is all about (...). If you want one million citizens to give their vote for this, we need to bring them into our local community offices to sign for this initiative which is not a national or a personal initiative, but an initiative born out of the need and necessity of this region. (Milan Milivojević, Association of Veterans and War Invalids of the Wars of the 1990s, Zrenjanin, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Zrenjanin, Serbia, November 28th 2009.)

We should try to fight oblivion in our societies.

(...) This community is mainly in the "I don't care what happens to other people" kind of mood. We need to bring people round to the "I care about it and I want to talk about it" position in order to establish the truth and help the Coalition for RECOM come into being in a proper manner. (Tijana Živanov, Municipal Committee of the Democratic Party in Zrenjanin, Serbia, Consultation with the local community, Zrenjanin, Serbia, November 28th 2009.)

Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM

Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina
December 5th 2009

The consultation with the local community on the Initiative for the creation of the Regional Commission for establishing the facts about war crimes and other serious human rights violations committed during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia (RECOM) held in Brčko, BiH, on December 5th 2009 was organized by the Tuzla Citizens' Forum. Eugen Jakovčić (Documenta Croatia) spoke about the goals and the up-to-date progress of the consultations process in the region. Branko Todorović (Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republika Srpska) talked about the most significant experiences of other truth commissions, while Vehid Šehić (Tuzla Citizens' Forum) moderated the discussion. The gathering was attended by 24 participants, most of whom represented victims' associations, former detention camp inmates' associations, associations of the families of missing veterans and civilians, non-governmental organizations, religious communities, and local authorities: Dragan Pajić, Mayor of the Brčko District BiH and Mirsad Đapo, President of the Municipal Assembly of the Brčko District BiH.

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations of the participants:

There is political will in the Brčko District BiH to establish the truth about the events that place during the war. Representatives of the government support the idea to create RECOM.

We need the truth about the events from the war to finally become known (...). We want to know the real truth because that can help empower our multi-ethnic community. Just tell us what we need to do in the Brčko District (...) and we will do it because we are fully aware that the Brčko District and the entire Bosnia and Herzegovina (...) cannot exist if we have three truths. (Mirsad Đapo, president of the Municipal Assembly of the Brčko District BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 5th 2009.)

I support this initiative unreservedly. We expect you to present clear ideas, to tell us what it is you want

us to do in order to make it happen, what steps you need us to take at the government and at the municipal level in order to be involved in the project (...). (Dragan Pajić, Mayor of the Brčko District BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 5th 2009.)

The people in Brčko, we are still not open with each other and we are not even aware yet that we need to be frank with each other not because of the European Union or European integration but because it is a precondition for a better future for all of us living here. (Čazim Suljević, Cultural Community Preporod, Brčko, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 5th 2009.)

The societal need to know the truth and deal with the past is quite mature. This initiative is something all victims need.

It is a very healthy, useful, and constructive idea, and all of us here, as members of this community, as members of a broader society, should support this idea individually or through institutions we represent as much as we can (...). This need has a general, societal, psychological, and a mental dimension within these different national communities here (...) so that we all want to find out the truth, to come closer together as a society and get rid of the burden we have been carrying on our shoulders. (Mustafa Gobelić, chief imam of the Medglis of the Islamic community, Brčko District, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 5th 2009.)

I feel for all victims because I am a victim myself and I would like this approach we are advocating, and as an association we will join this [Coalition for RECOM], and I will personally join; I want it to be successful. That's what the victims want. That is what we need if we want to have a peaceful future in BiH and across the region. (Vlado Dragojlović, Association of former detention camp inmates and prisoners, Association of detention camp inmates of Republika Srpska, Modriča, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 5th 2009.)

We salute the initiative and we expect to raise awareness about it to a level where it will obtain

broader support (...). We often discuss (...) criminal responsibility. However, in Brčko alone (...) there are ten or more women who suffered the horrors of rape (and who gave birth to children, now 13 or 14 years of age, conceived as a result of that act) who need psychotherapy and who need to go to Tuzla for their sessions. However, if they are of a lower social standing and are unable to afford therapy (and many of them can't) they just go through life like that, facing their trouble and their problems within the walls of their home. A woman recently committed suicide in Brčko. They live (...) between separated and isolated worlds and they remain prisoners of their own truth. (Čazim Suljević, Cultural Community Preporod, Brčko, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 5th 2009.)

RECOM must focus on the events from the recent war waged across the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

If we want to learn the truth about what happened during the recent war, if we want to find out the facts about the victims, we must focus on the events of this war. (Lazar Blagojević, Veterans' Organization of Republika Srpska, Šamac, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 5th 2009.)

Public hearings of victims will help change our perspective and wipe away the half-truths about what happened in the past. It is important that politicians listen to victims' testimonies.

Victims need to be given an opportunity to talk (...) and I think that after a while I think we will change our perspective about the events from the recent war (...). These hearings will erase the half-truths we have been hearing for so long, and I think we will be able to come up with an authentic account of everything that happened to us during the recent war. (Dragan Pajić, Mayor of the Brčko District BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 5th 2009.)

RECOM [the Coalition for RECOM] should hold consultations like these in all parliaments across the region, and not only to explain to members of parliaments why they think it is important to create RECOM but to bring victims and allow them to tell their stories. (Sead Golić, Association of the

missing, forcefully taken, and killed Bosniaks in the Brčko Municipality, Brčko, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 5th 2009.)

Rather than to see the perpetrators brought to justice, for the families of the missing it is more important to find the mortal remains of their loved ones and be able to give them a proper burial.

I don't have to sue anyone. I need the person that committed the crime to tell me where the bodies are so that we can have some peace finally. I just want them to give me the bones, to give me my child. All families whose loved ones are missing would be satisfied if they could only find out the truth about them and give them a proper burial. (Milorad Zimović, Association for tracing missing and killed Bosniaks of District Brčko, Brčko, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 5th 2009.)

Victims must have a first and last name and it must be carefully defined what a victim constitutes. There should be a distinction between those who were killed in action and those who were killed unarmed.

I am truly offended when victims are referred to as numbers. A victim cannot be a number. Each victim must have a first and last name and I think that job should have been done by government institutions in all entities; they should have made a register of all victims stating how that person became a victim. That work hasn't been done yet. From the moment a person is captured and is unarmed, that person becomes a victim. And somebody becomes responsible for that person. For that reason, it is very important to make a distinction between those who were killed in action and those who were unarmed at the time they lost their lives. (Rado Purić, Association of Disabled War Veterans, Brčko, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 5th 2009.)

It is necessary to make a register of all victims. And make sure they are categorized properly, as victims, war losses, or other categories. (Lazar Blagojević, Veterans' Organization of Republika Srpska, Šamac, BiH, Consultation with the local commu-

nity on the Initiative for RECOM, Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 5th 2009.)

Only victims have the right to talk about what happened to them and who did it. The ICTY was indispensable but its judgments are political.

When talking about such sensitive issues, victims have to be approached carefully and only victims can tell the story about themselves and those who harmed them. That is an easier way to find out the truth. If we are thinking too much about ICTY judgments, and I will allow myself to say that, the ICTY was indispensable because it opened up chapters we never would have opened otherwise (...). However, ICTY judgments are mostly political and we all know that victims don't need politics. (Vlado Dragojlović, Association of former detention camp inmates and prisoners, Association of detention camp inmates of Republika Srpska, Modriča, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 5th 2009.)

War crimes perpetrators cannot be granted amnesty.

War crimes are not subject to the statute of limitation and for that reason we should ask ourselves whether we can allow ourselves to discuss amnesty for war crimes perpetrators. (Vehih Šehić, Tuzla Citizens' Forum, Tuzla, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 5th 2009.)

Veterans' organizations must denounce its veterans who committed war crimes.

I was forced to take a gun although I never thought of going to war. And there are veterans who took guns and turned them against you or me or somebody else. You understand what I am saying, right? So that in the world of veterans, we have to make a distinction between those who went to war honourably and those who committed war crimes. I strongly condemn them and I never supported people who did. But it is important that all veterans' organizations do the same thing. (Narcis Mišanović, Association of demobilized veterans of the Army of BiH, Sarajevo, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 5th 2009.)

It is by far the best solution that RECOM is verified

by parliaments. Without the endorsement of national parliaments the commission will not be able to have the kind of impact we want it to have.

It would be the best solution for RECOM to be verified by state parliaments (...). If that support is unavailable, I am afraid that the commission will not be able to produce the same impact we want to have. (Effendi Mustafa Gobelić, Medglis of the Islamic Community, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 5th 2009.)

Members of RECOM should be professionals commanding authority. Victims should be main contributors in the process.

Members of the commission should be persons (...) who are familiar with this topic professionally (...), people who are widely trusted, whose work will not be denigrated, and whose findings will not be contradicted. Members of the commission should not be concerned with politics and they should be able to withstand all kinds of political pressure. (Lazar Blagojević, Veterans' Organization of Republika Srpska, Šamac, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 5th 2009.)

I believe they should be first of all professionals, but also people with intact authority, recognized in all communities, from the local to the regional level. (Marija Arslić, Josip Broz Tito Association, Brčko, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 5th 2009.)

Victims should be main contributors to the process (...). They should be members of the commission because they cannot be bought. I think that veterans should be here, too. Maybe they should not be members of the commission, but they should have an advisory capacity, or act as sympathizers. (Narcis Mišanović, Association of demobilized veterans of the Army of BiH, Sarajevo, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 5th 2009.)

We have to learn to talk about the crimes, to listen to each other and understand the suffering and pain of others.

When it comes to this topic (...), I can say that we are at the very beginning (...). We have to start talking

about the crimes (...) to try to reach the level where we can have a dialogue which means that we can tell others about our suffering and listen to others about theirs and try to understand each other. (Čazim Suljević, Cultural Community Preporod, Brčko, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 5th 2009.)

RECOM is not in the best interest of politicians. They will try to influence its creation, its way of work, and all its activities.

Politicians don't really want to create RECOM. It is not in their best interest because many of them will be targeted once the report is made. (Rado Purić, Association of Disabled War Veterans, Brčko, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 5th 2009.)

Politicians which are (...) in reality most responsible for the situation we are in (...) will try to do anything to influence the creation, the work, and the scope of activity of the commission. (Čazim Suljević, Cultural Community Preporod, Brčko, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 5th 2009.)

Based on the experiences of the ICTY, we have every reason to be concerned about our prospects of gaining access to state-owned documents.

We know that the ICTY is not able to obtain some documents and that makes me wonder if this commission, if it does not have the support of all political structures across the region of the former Yugoslavia, will be able to gain access to state-owned documents. (Čazim Suljević, Cultural Community Preporod, Brčko, BiH, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 5th 2009.)

National consultation with former detention camp prisoners on the Initiative for RECOM

Sarajevo, BiH
December 10th 2009

The consultation on the Initiative to create a Regi-

onal Commission for Establishing the Facts about War Crimes and Other Serious Human Rights Violations in the Former Yugoslavia was organized by the Association of Former Detention Camp Prisoners of BiH and the Association of BiH Journalists. The gathering was attended by 31 participants, representatives of the Association of Former Detention Camp Prisoners of BiH and the Croatian Association of Former Detention Camp Prisoners of the Homeland War in BiH. President of the Association of Former Detention Camp Prisoners from Republika Srpska cancelled the participation of eight members of their Association two days before the event. Speakers were Nataša Kandić (Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia), Zoran Šangut (Association of lawyers, Vukovar '91), and Bogdan Ivanišević (International Center for Transitional Justice). The discussion was moderated by Dženana Karup-Druško. The media outlets FTV and Dnevnik San reported from this event.

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations

The Initiative for RECOM is more than welcome and everyone should support it.

This is exactly why, because of the failures of the ICTY, because of the fact that the victims are being neglected in all countries in the region, as well as because of those who committed these war crimes, I think that such an initiative of the non-governmental sector is important. When I say that I think of RECOM first of all and I think that we should all support it and stand behind it. (Zoran Šangut, Association of lawyers, Vukovar '91, Vukovar, Croatia, National consultation with former detention camp prisoners on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, BiH, December 10th 2009.)

I am glad that there is (...) an initiative like this. Let's accept what's good about it and we can discuss the things we don't agree with. (Zlatko Prkić, Croatian Association of Former Detention Camp Prisoners of the Homeland War in BiH, Vareš, National consultation with former detention camp prisoners on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, BiH, December 10th 2009.)

RECOM is a solution but it has to be given a true meaning in order to become ours.

I just want to invite you to speak freely, to make suggestions. We don't have a ready solution, our solu-

tion is this commission but it has to have some content, some true meaning to become our commission. (Nataša Kandić, Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia, National consultation with former detention camp prisoners on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, BiH, December 10th 2009.)

We can ask these questions through RECOM, too, and tackle the issue of the facts, of war crimes, of status and social rights, but we can only do it if we speak truthfully about it. (Irfan Ajanović, Association of Former Detention Camp Prisoners of BiH, Sarajevo, National consultation with former detention camp prisoners on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, BiH, December 10th 2009.)

RECOM will only be successful if they manage to register all detention camps, discover all mass graves, and find out the facts about the missing.

Because of our many sleepless nights, because of torture and everything that happened to us in various detention camps, I think that we should first of all focus our energy on the truth. We need to come up with a definition of detention camps, collection centres, and so on, and mark these places properly, regardless on the side on which they were, to give them names for the sake of future generations, for the sake of peace and truth (...). If this initiative becomes a reality, I will consider it successful if it can cover three segments: if it registers all detention camps on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, if it finds all mass graves, and if it discover what happened to our loved ones who are missing. (Zoran Šangut, Association of lawyers, Vukovar '91, Vukovar, Croatia, National consultation with former detention camp prisoners on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, BiH, December 10th 2009.)

RECOM is a unique opportunity for the victims to make a coalition, to start showing respect for each other and to secure the respect of the governments.

We, the victims, we don't respect each other and therefore we cannot expect the governments to show respect for us and grant us the rights we are entitled to. Our government changed the thesis about victims and now mostly war crimes perpetrators are being treated as victims and the real victims are forgotten, all over the region. So, the very relationship of the government with respect to us, the victims, will be this way for as long as we are not able to sit down

together and make a unique coalition of victims. We are certainly not able to do it, but RECOM, on the other hand, is our only chance to do it. (Mirsad Duratović, Association of Former Detention Camp Prisoners Prijedor '92, Prijedor, BiH, National consultation with former detention camp prisoners on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, BiH, December 10th 2009.)

We have to define detention camps and collection centres. All place of detention and suffering should be marked.

All three sides in Bosnia and Herzegovina have their associations of detention camp prisoners, and I think it would be a good idea for all three sided to write a definition of a detention camp or a collection centre and why they thought the place where they were held was a detention camp. That definition should be further used to assess the places of detention organized by their own entities. So, not only where I was held prisoner, but also the detention locations that my own people set up for the members of other ethnic communities. The next natural step would be to mark all these locations the way the second world war camps were marked, such as Jasenovac, Auschwitz, etc (...) I denounce each and every war crime regardless of who committed it, and I will be very glad if the victims from the Lora camp can come on the day the Stajičevo camp memorial is posted. I can guarantee that if they decide to build a memorial in Split, at the Lora camp location, they will have my full support. (Zoran Šangut, Association of lawyers, Vukovar '91, Vukovar, Croatia, National consultation with former detention camp prisoners on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, BiH, December 10th 2009.)

There can be no discussion until we have resolved the main issue here and that is the Law on Detention Camp Prisoners. What is a camp? What is going to be our discussion topic within RECOM? We don't even have the basic issues solved. (Željko Vladić, Croatian Association of Former Detention Camp Prisoners of the Homeland War in BiH, Mostar, National consultation with former detention camp prisoners on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, BiH, December 10th 2009.)

The truth is, first of all, available through court proceedings.

How can we give our contribution to the truth? First of all we can testify in court proceedings. It is dif-

difficult to tell the truth without court proceedings. (Irfan Ajanović, Association of Former Detention Camp Prisoners of BiH, Sarajevo, National consultation with former detention camp prisoners on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, BiH, December 10th 2009.)

Public testimonies of victims can cause a counter effect if there are no sanctions for those who tell lies.

And I accept public hearing. But public hearings are an opportunity for those who don't like the truth and who want to tell lies. They cannot be punished for that and the damage is done the moment a false statement comes out in the open, in the media and so on. That can confuse the public and create chaos. What we will have then is a counter effect. (Irfan Ajanović, Association of Former Detention Camp Prisoners of BiH, Sarajevo, National consultation with former detention camp prisoners on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, BiH, December 10th 2009.)

Public testimonies of victims are very important because victims have no other opportunities to tell the media and the public what they have suffered.

Public testimony? I am in favour of public testimonies because otherwise I would not be able to have access to the media. We have our local TV station, the Herzegovina TV, which can be heard within a 2km radius. That means I have no way of telling my story (...) and I think we should show respect for each other and that we should never deny the suffering of other prisoners is totally wrong. (Darko Matković, Croatian Association of Former Detention Camp Prisoners of the Homeland War in BiH, National consultation with former detention camp prisoners on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, BiH, December 10th 2009.)

Science and the time, with the help of victims' associations and good initiatives, we can find the truth and achieve reconciliation.

Only science and time together with these associations, these initiatives, but science and time in the first place, supported by us, can yield really good results. Then we can have what is indispensable in the Western Balkans – truth, justice based on that truth, sanction based on justice, and based on all that – reconciliation and the fact is there is no life

without reconciliation (...). RECOM is an extraordinary idea but it will have to allow for a lot of counter-productive things to happen before it can reach its goal. (Irfan Ajanović, Association of Former Detention Camp Prisoners of BiH, Sarajevo, National consultation with former detention camp prisoners on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, BiH, December 10th 2009.)

I am a pessimist because there are ministers in the current government who actually organized detention camps.

I am a pessimist because many lies have been put on paper so far and they are treated as truth. Many things have been said and most of these things are lies. We are fighting windmills here. There are even people here among us who can or will not believe that members of their own ethnic community ran detention camps for members of other ethnic communities. And the reason is simple. People who actually organized these camps are ministers in the current government and they don't want any stories about detention camps to be told or published, let alone a law on the victims of torture or something like that. So, I think that it will take a long time before we can do something like that and the truth will only come out when different people are in ministerial positions. (Mirko Zelenika, Croatian Association of Former Detention Camp Prisoners of the Homeland War in BiH National consultation with former detention camp prisoners on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, BiH, December 10th 2009.)

If they want to work together, former detention camp prisoners must admit all crimes.

We must not deny a single war crime or human right violation that happened! If a crime has happened, we, former detention camp inmates, must say: that's right, it happened, and we should not allow barricades to be put between us if we want to work together. (Zlatko Prkić, Croatian Association of Former Detention Camp Prisoners of the Homeland War in BiH, Vareš, National consultation with former detention camp prisoners on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, BiH, December 10th 2009.)

Detention camp prisoners' representative to RECOM must be a person able to admit that his or her fellow nationals also committed crimes.

That person must be able to admit that members of his or her ethnic group also committed crimes so

that they can listen to the other side talking about crimes without an emotional reaction like “Wait, you, too, committed crimes! So, I want the facts first so that I can look Pero in the eyes and that Pero can look me in the eyes, so that I can listen to him talking about his suffering and that Pero can hear me out when I talk about mine. It is only then that we can actually talk about RECOM. There’s nothing before that. And it is only then that we can talk about our individual cases. We should talk about whether we support RECOM, who do we want to delegate, and not what my personal problems are. (Mirsad Dizdarević, Association of Former Detention Camp Prisoners of BiH, Jajce, BiH, National consultation with former detention camp prisoners on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, BiH, December 10th 2009.)

The Association of Former Detention Camp Prisoners of BiH is looking for a clear vision of the Initiative for RECOM and its own role in the process.

We want a clear vision about what RECOM can do for us. What is the goal of RECOM? What is our purpose in the entire process? What is it going to be and how will it be formed? Will it miss some important issues? Why aren’t representatives of the Association of Former Detention Camp Prisoners from Republika Srpska present? I will only speak on my own behalf; I must say that I have not seen that clear a vision so far. I don’t understand what is being offered with respect to the goals that should give us answers to all of the questions which we don’t quite understand and which we sometimes don’t want to accept and which are sometimes false. (Murat Tahirović, Association of Former Detention Camp Prisoners of BiH, Sarajevo, National consultation with former detention camp prisoners on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, BiH, December 10th 2009.)

Associations of Former Detention Camp Prisoners can help define the RECOM mandate, they can help collect one million signatures, they can collect documentation and take statements from victims.

At this state, before RECOM is established, during the consultations stage, of course if you consider this to be worth the effort, these associations can influence the content of RECOM. The role of such associations is to help collect signatures. Nataša Kandić mentioned that it is planned to collect one million signatures to submit to the parliaments together with the request to form RECOM. That

number of signatures will grant a greater legitimacy to the request. Once the commission is established, members of former detention camp associations can become members of the commission (...). In some countries truth commissions employed hundreds, 700 or 800 people, in others less than that. It takes a lot of effort to take statements from witnesses and it is good if the statements are taken by those who understand the situation, who know what to ask and who have heard it all already. Unfortunately, many of you are quite familiar with this issue. You can also help by testifying, by giving statements, by collecting materials – simply, I think there is a lot associations of former detention camp inmates can do. (Bogdan Ivanišević, International Center for Transitional Justice, National consultation with former detention camp prisoners on the Initiative for RECOM, Sarajevo, BiH, December 10th 2009.)

National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations about the RECOM Initiative

**Belgrade, Serbia
December 17th 2009**

The national consultation with non-governmental organisations were organized by the Humanitarian Law Center and the Agency for Cooperation with Non-Governmental Organisations and European Harmonisation, the Belgrade City Administration. It was attended by 44 representatives of non-governmental organisations from across Serbia. The observers came from the embassies of the United Kingdom and The Netherlands. Nataša Kandić (Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia) and Bogdan Ivanišević (International Centre for Transitional Justice) were the lecturers. Dragan Popović (Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Serbia) acted as the moderator.

Suggestions, views, recommendations of the participants

The City of Belgrade supports the formation of RECOM.

To begin with, on behalf of the City of Belgrade and its administration – welcome. Why does the city support RECOM? During the 1990s the citizens of Belgrade and to a certain extent its administration which was in opposition [to the republican govern-

ment] showed their readiness to raise their voice against the war. When I say 'the citizens of Belgrade' I mean, in the first place, the representatives of non-governmental organisations. One of the priorities of our agency is the region-wide cooperation in the effort, of course, to renew broken relations, shed light on the past for the sake of a clearer future, first and foremost, and, of course, an adequate satisfaction of the victims. (Danko Runić, director, Agency for Cooperation with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade City Administration, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

RECOM should set up a body to work together with professionals who participated in the war in locating witnesses and scenes of crimes.

As a former member of the special units of the Republic of Serbia I had the opportunity to talk with then officers and members of the professional forces of the Republic of Serbia. I think, therefore, that there should be a commission within RECOM which would work with professionals who are now in touch with direct witnesses in the majority of cases, of the majority of war crimes in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, Kosovo in particular. (Nenad Petrović, Palestra, Kruševac, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

It is time to take stock in writing of everything that has emerged in the course of discussions, including dilemmas and different opinions.

I think that time has come to write a serious draft based on all that was done during these 68 meetings. I was slightly taken aback when I heard '68 meetings'; it reminds me of certain things in politics. Of course, there are many dilemmas still, but I think that after four and a half years we have arrived at something that is indisputable and I think that that should be the skeleton of this draft. And then, in that text, to present all the dilemmas where they still exist, dilemmas or different opinions. I am confident that people will participate even more and be more active in further discussions when they have something that they can talk about. (Zoran Živković, Millennium – Centre for the Development of the Civil Society, Belgrade, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

It will be difficult to collect one million signa-

tures, both technically and motivationally.

I have to say that I am pessimistic when it comes to how the authorities will respond, the current and future ones, unless something changes in any one of these states, successors to the former Yugoslavia. Maybe I am wrong. In any event, this proposal needs to be presented and major pressure brought to bear. It is far from easy to collect one million signatures, even technically, let alone motivationally and in any other respect. All this needs to be begun as early as possible or else we shall spend the best years of our lives discussing the initiative and it is time to bring it to an end. (Zoran Živković, Millennium – Centre for the Development of the Civil Society, Belgrade, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

The regional commission may be made only of the national commissions and the latter should be independent. In Serbia the emphasis should be on the state's admission of its responsibility for the crimes.

I think that all these consultations are useful; They give some information, at least for people on the ground who are participating in this for the first time; they are simply motivated to take an approach to all this. However, I still think that a regional commission can be made only of the national commissions which should be independent. A gathering such as this one, made of non-governmental organisations in Serbia should continue to work and bring pressure on the authorities in Serbia itself. And I think that it is much more important to establish the cooperation between state institutions and non-governmental organisations in Serbia itself. It would be much more efficient if the focus were placed on Serbia (...) to lay the emphasis on the perpetrators and the state, to actively demand from the state that it admits responsibility for the crimes, including the genocide. (Sonja Biserko, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, Belgrade, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

It needs to be decided whether it is better to have commissions in individual states first and then make the regional commission from them.

I'd like to include all the states, but perhaps Slovenia and Macedonia don't have to be there. But those others should all be covered by the work of the

commissions. And then, at some major reunion, such as the one we had in Bečići, when we have all the states represented, we could decide whether we should have commissions in individual states and then together make a regional commission out of them. We need to have an answer what to do if a state refuses to participate in this regional commission and how we shall make up for its absence in finding the truth. If all the states set up their commissions, then perhaps this will create mechanisms to for -, with the help of the international community - a joint, regional truth-finding commission. (Alija Halilović, Civil Forum of Novi Pazar, the net of human rights committees, CHRIS, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, 17 December 2009.)

If the authorities reject RECOM, we shall be denied the truth.

I think, if RECOM fails, if our authorities and politicians do not support, do not accept this as a model for finding the truth, then we shall indeed be denied the truth because our histories are written by those qualified and by those unqualified so that in fifty years time we might have hollow histories or those written by amateurs or warriors or war-mongers. They love writing diaries now, and it's always somebody else's fault, never mine. Sorry, that's all. (Alija Halilović, Civil Forum of Novi Pazar, the net of human rights committees, CHRIS, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

National commissions cannot create a climate in which the states emerged from the former Yugoslavia will willingly admit the responsibility for the crimes committed. Facts cannot be established at the national level.

How does one do it, requesting responsibility and obtaining from the state its admission of responsibility? Or, for instance, how shall a commission, a national one, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, find the truth as it cannot be done without Serbia and Croatia. Just think - the perpetrators are, largely in Serbia, and in Croatia. Or, how could a commission, a national one, in Kosovo, whom would it deal with there? In what way does one arrive at a pure form in which every society adopts a stand towards its past, its history, its responsibility, how does one arrive at an ideal, critical self-examination? I, for one, do not believe that it is possible by means of a national approach... (Nataša Kandić, Humanitarian Law

Centre, Belgrade, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

Non-governmental organisations should bring pressure on Serbia to look at itself.

I think that it is very important that these plans for the creation of a joint state of Serbs here [in Serbia] are exposed. There is plenty of material for that in the Tribunal in The Hague. (...) Who will make us - Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo? - admit that it was an aggression? Nobody. I think it is much more important to discuss it within the country because it is the only way for Serbia to look at itself in the face. (Sonja Biserko, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, Belgrade, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

Kosovo Serbs and Albanians need to be supported and empowered to join this process.

Serbs and Albanians who are already engaged in this process in Kosovo need to be empowered because they have already said that nobody from Belgrade has the right to initiate the process in Kosovo. The international community must be on their side too and then, with its help, to start an arduous and painful process. (Aleksandar Stojanović, Centre for the Development of Local Communities, Kosovska Mitrovica, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

RECOM needs to have a multidisciplinary team so that the events can be analysed from different angles.

I'd like to ask something, Mrs Biserko mentioned the qualifications of those individuals; I think that a multidisciplinary team should be involved and that things should be analysed from different angles. (Sedat Vrcić, Flores, Sjenica, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

The process concerning the formation of RECOM should include religious communities and political parties.

I'd like to welcome (...) the expansion of this whole process, first the number of those involved because I think that it was high time to do it. Maybe simi-

lar processes ended as they did because some of the crucial actors were not included. By this I mean, in the first place, the religious communities that you mentioned and the parliamentary parties. Needless to say, every one of us has the right to like or dislike some of the actors. To begin with, they are also a heterogeneous group, but I think that the manoeuvring room for the achievement of the goal is minimal unless they are included. (Milan Sitarski, Centre for Religious Research, Belgrade Open School, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

The most important thing is to de-ethnicise the victims and to create compassion in the region.

We must de-ethnicise those victims, we must explain to people, in all the republics, how those victims felt. We must first bring closer to them the feeling of pain and only then can we put pressure on the state in whatever way (at the regional or national level). And then it will not be a problem. But in the first place we must find a way to put an end to the model of violence as a solution to the problems in the society and the family and only after that we can devise the mechanisms to put pressure on the state. (Simon Simonović, student, Belgrade, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

It is easier to achieve the consensus about the perpetrators at the regional than at the national level.

it is very easy to achieve a regional consensus regarding the fate of the missing, the camps, this and that, but as regards the criminals it's a no-go. I think that some agreement needs to be achieved primarily at the regional level. It then gives one greater power to act nationally. (Milovan Radonjić, Evrokontakt, Kruševac, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

RECOM is a tool of democratic dialogue.

I think that this group should focus on what we can and must do, that is what is indispensable for us to do to make the states accept RECOM. The Coalition for RECOM itself is a tool of democratic dialogue and in its future work it will find answers that I believe will be the right ones for this discussion. (Boško Nektarijević, Forum for Ethnic Relations, Belgrade,

Serbia, (National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

Non-governmental organisations should put pressure on local governments to support RECOM as a part of the European integration process.

And then, if gentlemen [local governments] do not want to take part in this story, then we shall stigmatise them, too. So, if a municipality which received 3,5 million euros from the European Commission in the name of European integrations, does not wish to participate in another kind of European integration, then we shall have a little talk with them. I see no other tool for us but to put pressure, too. (Virdžinija Marina Guzina, Civil Parliament, Vršac, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

The ambassadors to Serbia [international community] should support the initiative for RECOM as a part of their support to Serbia.

If last year the ambassadors went to put pressure from town to town, from village to village, so that this massive coalition which is in power could be made, why shouldn't those same ambassadors come and say, 'Hey, wait a sec, we're giving you money, come on, do something concrete. (Virdžinija Marina Guzina, Civil Parliament, Vršac, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

RECOM should take into account people who got rich during the war because they are behind the crimes.

We suffer from certain things which citizens perhaps do not associate quite clearly with the crimes which took place. And these are, say, corruption, or, say, monopoly, these are, say, unstable governments supported by those selfsame people who have got very rich and I think, therefore, that the discussion should address these things too. I mean, even though we have very accurate lists of war criminals, are they being brought to justice or should they be brought to justice; perhaps inaccurate lists of victims, we do not have accurate lists at all, who are those people who enriched themselves through this tragedy, are their names quite clearly associated with crimes which could have had economic reasons behind them, and all the while those people are indirectly

affecting the living standard. (Gordan Vele, Group 484, Belgrade, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

Victims and witnesses should testify in public. They should speak freely, but under professional supervision.

As for who will speak at public hearings, I think it is very important to get the stories of both the victims and the witnesses. As to how to hear the victims in public, I think it is very important to allow the victims to speak freely but not without professional supervision. This means that there should be examiners skilled in public hearing as well as in gentle guiding. (Nataša Ljubomirović, Group 484, Belgrade, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

Discussions about RECOM are the broadest social process in Serbia and the region. RECOM by itself has the potential to restore the dignity of the victims.

REKOM is very, very crucial if the victims are to regain their names and their full identity. I also think, having followed the whole consultations process, forums and everything that it is the broadest possible process which takes place in Serbia and the civil society. (Goran Miletić, Civil Rights Defenders, Office in Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, December 17th 2009.)

If REKOM advocates reparations for all victims, it will earn the commission major support in the states of the region.

I think that this truth commission should envisage reparations for the victims for two reasons. First, I believe that the fundamental principles of justice demand that a person victimised, especially in such a monstrous manner, should be compensated so that he/she can have the possibility to go on living, so that the victims' children can have a chance to receive education and live a better life (...). If we start from the fact that all victims should be compensated, it could constitute a major incentive because in Serbia, for instance, the emphasis would be on Serbian nationals, in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the nationals of Bosnia and Herzegovina and no distinction would be made among the victims based on their ethnic origin or religion. (Bojan Gavrilović, Belgrade

Centre for Human Rights, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

Non-governmental organisations should be the chief actors of the 1,000,000 Signatures Campaign for RECOM.

Non-governmental organisations included in this story since the start of the consultations, should step up their involvement from the beginning of this year, that is, start collecting the signatures, say, in February; it could all be expedited and non-governmental organisations in every town can be the chief actors of the project. (Nenad Porobić, Centre for Non-Violent Action, Belgrade, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

The question is if the signatures for RECOM can be collected at the time of the elections in BiH.

We were thinking about submitting [to the parliaments in the region] our model towards the end of the year. However, the electoral campaign begins in Bosnia and Herzegovina in September, the elections are in October and we wonder if our campaign One Million Signatures for RECOM will be possible. (Nataša Kandić, Humanitarian Law Centre, Belgrade, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

I believe it is wrong to tie up the collection of signatures with possible elections at that time; we are in the Balkans and there are always some elections somewhere. (Zoran Živković, Millennium, Belgrade, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

Brčko would be a good place as the seat of RECOM.

Just a brief suggestion concerning the head office of RECOM, for the regional commission as you call it. I think that Brčko is self-indicated because it is now-here and everywhere. That is, some attempts at political pressure by this or that authority will be quite possible everywhere. Due to the circumstances, it will be most unlikely to have a political pressure group in this lovely town and it is also well positioned, geographically speaking. As a seat, yes. Test the enthusiasm of potential commission members. (Zoran

Živković, Millennium, Belgrade, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

REKOM should address the facts about what happened, not the historical causes.

I think that the historical causes are well-known, that there was a lot of talk about them and that this is not something that REKOM should address. This is a topic for the science, for historians, sociologists, anthropologists and so on and I think that REKOM will be busy enough finding the facts about concrete matters and should not go into historical causes (...) it means going back to, I don't know, as somebody said, to Berlin Congress, World War I, the Battle of Kosovo or I don't know, the arrival of the Slavs in this territory. There are simply no witnesses for those things. (Sandra Farkaš, Peščanik (Hourglass) Women's Association, Kruševac, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

I think that the history is important but I also believe that it would make the whole process more complicated. We should not forget that there would be six, three, seven different histories which would have to be incorporated in one truth. From the point of view of the perpetrators' motives which made them commit the crimes, because they believed that their forefathers had been victimised in the past, going into that may make sense, but I'm afraid it would open Pandora's box and divert the attention from what has to be done and to my mind it is the stories of the victims and above all the reparations. (Bojan Gavrilović, Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

REKOM should address the causes and the historical context

The victims expect to hear some answers which go beyond the fact that person A came to a village and killed person B. One must go beyond that. (Goran Miletić, Civil Rights Defenders, office in Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

So we shall only deal with the victims and then (...) we shall produce some material based on this, and we will not go into the causes and the whole context. I think it is quite impossible (Virdžinija Marina

Guzina, Civil Parliament, Vršac, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

In other words, this is not the talk about history for talking about history's sake, for the sake of an intellectual exercise or anything of the sort; this is dealing with that part of the history or that aspect of the history which is relevant for us here if we are to avoid its repetition. This is the idea behind the dealing with the history by the truth commissions. (Bogdan Ivanišević, International Centre for Transitional Justice, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

REKOM should address the responsibility of the media.

The political causes are something else and talking about them, I think that here it is impossible to avoid an examination of the responsibility of the media because we know how much did the media mobilise the masses for the war, war crimes and so on in the early 1990s and throughout the war; specifically, the role of the RTS in Serbia – I think it is important to go into that. (Sandra Farkaš, Peščanik (Hourglass) Women's Association, Kruševac, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

Talk with people in local communities as much as possible and acquaint them with the initiative.

I think it is very important at the local level, that is in different milieus in the region, to talk, to talk, to discuss. I think that one of the causes for the armed conflicts was that people had no opportunity to talk about something that has troubled them for a long, long time, something from the past and so on. (Nataša Ljubomirović, Group 484, Belgrade, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

The legitimacy of the initiative rests with its regional character, a million signatures and that it is an initiative from below, ours for us.

This whole initiative is legitimised by this regional dimension, the regional character of the initiative; the regional debate and one million signatures provide both the legitimacy and the credibility. (Nataša

Kandić, Humanitarian Law Centre, Belgrade, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

The third segment which vests RECOM with legitimacy is that the initiative comes from below, it is ours for us and it seems to me that this focus is what distinguishes it and why it can be argued that it might succeed. (Nataša Govedarica, Civil Initiatives, Belgrade, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

Public RTVs should have the central place in promoting the RECOM initiative.

There are public RTVs which are duty-bound, which we as citizens, each in his or her country pay for and (...) and the first task of our media initiative intended to promote this idea and enlist the support in this way needs to be directed at public RTVs. (Nataša Govedarica, Civil Initiatives, Belgrade, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, December 17th 2009.)

Apart from the public television, local media also play an important role in the shaping of the public opinion.

It seems to me that the media are not supporting adequately this whole story. The media indeed are decisive when it comes to influencing the politicians and the public opinion in any state. I think it is truly indispensable, not only in the central media, but, above all, in the local media, to talk about this as much as possible and even to air the stories of victims from all communities, those who were victimised in the recent wars. Maybe even pay for it. (Ljiljana Stojanović, Centre for the Development of Democracy and the South of Serbia, Vranje, Serbia, National Consultations with Non-Governmental Organisations, Belgrade, Serbia, 17 December 2009.)

National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM

**Podgorica, Montenegro
December 17th 2009**

The national consultation with intellectuals on the

Initiative for RECOM in Podgorica was organized by the Center for Civic Education (CGO) from Podgorica. The gathering was attended by 44 participants. Introductory speeches were given by Vesna Teršelič (Documenta, Croatia) and Dragan Popović (Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia). The discussion was moderated by Daliborka Uljarević (Executive Director of the CGO, Podgorica).

The gathering was attended by eminent intellectuals – university professors, writers, sociologists, analysts, military officials, retired diplomats, judges, human rights activists, journalists, and politicians. Daily Vijesti and Dan, Radio Antenna M, NTV Montena, Mina, Radio Montenegro, TV Pink M, and TV IN reported about the gathering.

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations of the participants.

RECOM is a response to the limitations of existing dealing with the past mechanisms.

Existing dealing with the past mechanisms employed in the post-Yugoslav countries as well as those practised internationally are very valuable and meaningful, but they are obviously insufficient. In order to do the job properly, we need additional activities, and I believe RECOM is the right way to go. (Dubravka Uljarević, Center for Civic Education, Podgorica, Montenegro, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

Victims are being marginalized in all post-Yugoslav countries. RECOM should be able to create a space for all victims to be heard and identified and it should also prevent the selective presentation of facts about war crimes.

I think I have to say that regardless of the national group they belong to, victims are today marginalized all over the region, including Croatia. I think it is important to create a space for all victims – to talk about all victims and not just about those we already know a lot about. We wish to offer a model, a suggestion about how to stop presenting the facts in a selective manner, we want to make sure that when talking about war crimes and victims of war crimes, that we can talk about the fate of the victims of all war crimes. (Vesna Teršelič, Documenta, Croatia, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

It is very important that RECOM is established by governments because only governments can prevent war crimes denial and initiate changes in school curriculums.

It is crucial that a body like this is formed in an official manner so that its findings are credible. The governments have the power to prevent war crimes denial (...). Governments can even pass laws, as was the case in Germany when the government passed the Law on the Prohibition of the Holocaust Denial. Also, only governments have the power to change school curriculums and initiate changes in school history books etc. (...). And most definitely, real truth commissions must be independent. (Dragan Popović, Humanitarian Law Centre, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

Not everybody believes that the current governments will try to preserve the independence and autonomy of RECOM from their political influence.

I am not quite sure that it is possible to ask the governments now in office to create and finance RECOM and then to step aside, respecting its autonomy and independence without interfering with its work. (Milika Pavlović, writer from Bar, Montenegro, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

There is a dilemma whether to create national commissions first and later connect them into a body called RECOM or to form RECOM at the outset.

Would it be better to form national commissions first and then integrate them into RECOM or go directly to RECOM. (Branimir Jukić, Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Montenegro, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

Each country should make a register of the killed, the missing, detention camps locations, prisons, and other crimes, and then approach a regional network.

It is an undisputable fact that there are many killed and missing persons, former detention camp

or prison inmates, so it makes sense, as the man who spoke before me said; it makes sense to create a national commission first to clean up in our own backyard first, so to speak... When we gather all these facts, we will have a result of the 1990s in front of us. Then you can ask your respective governments to take some measures to solve these people's problems. Then we can connect into a regional network in an attempt to solve these problems. (Goran Radić, lawyer from Podgorica, Montenegro, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

Facts established at a national level will not be readily accepted in the entire region.

When we are talking about establishing the facts on a national level, I think it will be very difficult to make sure they are accepted in the entire region, and that is a very important part of this whole idea. It is crucial to talk about the wars and to establish the facts in a manner which will be authentic in the countries concerned so that from that point on it can become a foundation for building mutual trust or reconciliation among the nations of the former Yugoslavia. (Vesna Teršelič, Documenta, Croatia, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

National commissions cannot access archives owned by other states in the region.

The fact is that to date all national initiatives have failed, because, as Vesna pointed out, they did not have support from other countries. Also, national commissions can hardly give answers and access archives and documentation owned by other countries. National bodies can hardly convince the victims from other communities living in a different country that it is now okay to trust a national body created by a government whose institutions killed their families. (Dragan Popović, Humanitarian Law Centre, Serbia, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

Members of national minorities will only support a regional commission and not a national commission.

And in the end, national versus a regional commission – my answer is regional because national

commissions would be anaemic, so to speak, it would be discouraged instead of encouraged by members of other nationalities and nations. (Azra Jasović, lawyer from Podgorica, Montenegro, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

Most facts have been made public but the problem is how to confront political, media, and religious elites with them considering the way they treat war crimes perpetrators from their national community and victims from other communities.

I can say that we are rather well informed about the war crimes committed on the territory of the former Yugoslavia by means of the indictment handed down by the ICTY or by national war crimes trial chambers. In my opinion it is much more difficult to make political, media, and religious elites deal with them. I wonder if they are at all able to acknowledge these facts and I would like to know how they treat war crimes perpetrators from their own community versus victims belonging to other ethnic groups. With no intention to single anyone out, I would like to know if some progress has been made and if there have been any changes in the political matrix and the mentality generally within the region of the former Yugoslavia. (Branimir Jukić, Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Montenegro, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

RECOM can count on the support of the Fact-Finding Commission of the International Red Cross Committee.

And one more idea – the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission of the International Red Cross Committee is tasked with establishing the facts about war crimes and serious violations of the international humanitarian law. It is made up of experts in various fields and the only member from the former Yugoslavia region is Prof. Starčević. I hope this means something and I hope that this man can help us. He is a human rights activist, a former soldier, who left the army the moment he realized the army was violating human rights. Soon after he joined the International Red Cross Committee and the human rights protection movement and I hope it will help us secure the support of such a unique commission functioning within an institution such as International Red Cross Committee. (Ivana Jelić,

Faculty of Law, Podgorica, Montenegro, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

RECOM will have a hard time establishing the causes of the conflict because all governments will defend their predecessors.

I think that RECOM should explore the causes of the war. It is not going to be easy because everyone will defend their country and their nation (...). I think that discovering the causes of the war should be part of RECOM's mandate since academics will not be able to do it for a long time. We have to take a shared position on this: the war happened and wars never happen spontaneously, they are always planned. Let's talk about those who planned the war. Once we understand who planned the war, we'll know who created the war-mongering politics, and also who was in power. Then we'll know who the planners were. (Blagoje Grahovac, retired Army General, Podgorica, Montenegro, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

RECOM should tackle the issue of the causes of the war and war planners.

I think that it is necessary to deal with the causes of war. (Azra Jasović, lawyer from Podgorica, Montenegro, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

When we were elementary or middle school students we all learned about the real causes and immediate causes of the big wars. We all knew that immediate causes were of a superficial nature and that real causes were something very deep. So, I absolutely support General Grahovac and others who insist that we need to focus on the planners of the war. (Slaven Lekić, analyst from Podgorica, Montenegro, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

The context of the war can only be established after the facts have been established.

It is still unclear whether this commission will have a mandate to establish the context of the conflict. I think the commission should first establish the facts and then try to determine the context. Howe-

ver, this issue still remains unanswered because we are not sure who should be the people determining the context – honest historians, honest intellectuals etc... All I know is that context must be determined for the sake of future generations. They must know what happened. (Dragoljub Vuković, journalist from Podgorica, Montenegro, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

RECOM should try to determine the context of the conflict because understanding the context means drawing conclusions and lessons for the future.

I believe it is crucial that RECOM determines the context of the conflict because the context itself was the wave that spread over entire nations making them willing to accept war crimes as a way to solve the problems inherited from the period when we all lived in one country. Knowing the context will help us draw some conclusions for the future along with recommendations for a life more or less shared with our neighbours. (Radomir Laković, Math and Natural Sciences Faculty, Podgorica, Montenegro, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

The Coalition for RECOM should win over the public because those making a decision on the creation of RECOM will be influenced by public opinion about RECOM.

The RECOM initiative must have the powerful support of the public because those deciding on the creation of RECOM, first of all politicians, will be looking for public reaction to this idea. Therefore, it is necessary to have a strong public relations team able to make the public understand what the goals of such an initiative are. (Aleksandra Zeković, human rights researcher, Montenegro, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

We need to take advantage of the prevailing mood of citizens and political elites to embrace European integrations and we should create RECOM as part of that momentum.

My question is: what if our governments turn against RECOM and refuse to form it? I think it should be formed anyway and I think that everybody including the NGO sector, the media, and the entire soci-

ety at a national level should pressure the government into accepting the request to create RECOM. But, as I said, even if they don't, RECOM should be created (...). So, we need to make good use of what we have available today – the desire of both the citizens and political elites to embrace European integration and use that momentum to create RECOM. (Bran-ko Lukovac, Igman Initiative, Podgorica, Montenegro, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

One of the goals of RECOM should be to demystify national heroes.

One of the goals of RECOM, in my opinion, should be to demystify national heroes at national levels, war crimes perpetrators who have been praised as heroes in their communities. (Azra Jasović, lawyer from Podgorica, Montenegro, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

At the moment Serbia is not taking part in any official initiatives where Kosovo representatives are active. How can we solve that problem since it is necessary that both Serbia and Kosovo take part in the work of RECOM?

At this moment Serbia does not want to take part in any initiatives where Kosovo representatives are active. Will such behaviour of Serbia reflect to the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina so that they, too, make a decision not to join for the same reason? It is something we need to think about. (Aleksandra Zeković, human rights researcher, Montenegro, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

Collecting the facts is very important because the governments are destroying evidence of their responsibility for the atrocities committed during the war.

I think that the role of RECOM is significant especially in terms of fact-finding because we are all aware that our governments are destroying evidence of their responsibility, entire archives are being burnt – so let's collect whatever evidence we can while we still can. (Slaven Lekić, analyst, Podgorica, Montenegro, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

Citizens manipulated into supporting the war by their own governments are also victims.

Citizens manipulated into supporting the war by their own governments and by the media can also be considered victims... I think it is very important to understand that in countries such as Montenegro where we can only dream about having a significantly different government... (Budislav Minić, lawyer from Kolašin, Montenegro, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

The non-governmental sector, especially in Montenegro, must not allow the selection of members to annul the meaning of the commission as is the case with the selection of the human rights protection officials.

The selection process must be transparent – the non-governmental sector must not allow the government to chose members of the commission in a manner that would annul the meaning of the commission as is the case with the selection of human rights protection officials who practice the human rights protection from their own point of view, in accordance with their professional capacity, and primarily to the extent not jeopardizing their jobs. (Azra Jasović, lawyer from Podgorica, Montenegro, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

The support for victims is a precondition for the creation of RECOM.

I just want to alert you that, in the history of truth commissions, there are examples around the world where at one point, before, during, or after the formation of the commission the truth commission was on one side and the families of the victims on the other side. I am sure there are mechanisms that can be used to prevent situations like these. (Gordan Stojanović, publicist, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

Maybe it is too early for the governments to able to create a commission that is independent in its work.

We are witnessing situations where the government refuses to include people who have their own integrity and opinion in affairs that are less important

than this one ... I can't imagine these governments setting up mechanisms, forming commissions full of free-thinking people, courageous intellectuals, willing and eager to investigate and process war crimes... I can't help thinking it is too premature for the governments to create such commissions. Of course, formally they can do it, but we'll end up having a commission which will not do the job properly. (Stanko Marić, Association of the Lawyers of Montenegro, National consultation with intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 17th 2009.)

National Consultation with Non-Governmental Organisations about the RECOM Initiative

**Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo
December 19th 2009**

The national consultation with NGOs was organised by the Humanitarian Law Center - Kosovo in Priština/Prishtinë on December 19th 2009. It was attended by 35 representatives of Albanian and Bosniac civil society organisations; organisations representing Turks, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians and Serbs did not take part. Nataša Kandić (Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia), Eugen Jakovčić (Documenta, Croatia) and Nora Ahmetaj, human rights activist, Kosovo) were panelists. The meeting was moderated by Bekim Blakaj (Humanitarian Law Center - Kosovo).

The regional commission shall provide facts about the past based on real events and this will benefit the whole region.

We support the regional approach because we believe that the regional approach will produce some effect, where the participants will mandate the commission to interpret the history as it happened, based on events which took place and which will not permit that any sides be taken to suit the interests of a particular society and will instead bring benefit to everybody in the region. (Ylber Mahxuni, Youth Step, Vučitrn/Vushtrri, Kosovo, National Consultation with Non-Governmental Organisations, Priština, Kosovo, December 19th 2009.)

RECOM means healing of wounds and closing the pain and that is an indispensable step towards reconciliation.

The role of the commission is discussed amidst silence, whether or not it should be associated with reconciliation and that simply depends on the perception, how and in what way. This is obvious and it seems to me that some aversion has been created, unnecessary I'd say, to what is, after all, good for everybody. The activity of this commission can offer what we, in therapeutic parlance call the healing of wounds or closing the pain and this produces a therapeutic effect and may be, I could say, an indispensable step on a road which could be long and complicated but will eventually lead to reconciliation. (Lulzim Arapi, Association for Psycho-Social Support to Children, Đakovica/Gjakovë, Kosovo, National Consultation with Non-Governmental Organisations, Priština, Kosovo, December 19th 2009.)

RECOM has great potential regarding rapprochement, reconciliation and expansion of the field of common interest.

It is not easy to find the area of common interest among sides to a conflict and so I say, surely there are the victims and the interest to shed light on the crimes and various perpetrators who violated the human rights of those victims, well, that common interest has a great potential to bring people closer together; it even has a diplomatic value because it is cross-border by nature and I believe that in spite of the fact which is, how shall I put it, sad and looks like a legal problem, It nevertheless has the potential to bring people closer together and broaden this field of common interest (Lazar Stojanović, film director, Belgrade Serbia, National Consultation with Non-Governmental Organisations, Priština, Kosovo, December 19th 2009.)

The main goal needs to be reconciliation and it is possible only by dealing with the past.

We should bear in mind that a precondition for the reconciliation process is the process of confrontation with the truth. And this is indispensable if the main goal, reconciliation, is to be achieved, and this is the request of the future. (Nafije Kuqi, Independent Union of Kosovo Pensioners and Invalids, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, National Consultation with Non-Governmental Organisations, Priština, Kosovo, December 19th 2009.)

RECOM offers the opportunity for the perpetrators of war crimes to atone or lessen their responsibility by speaking out about the misdeeds in which they participated.

Another thing which comes to mind regarding what might be the consequences, the positive social effect of RECOM, is, as these reconciliation commissions in different parts of the world have shown, that it offers the opportunity to people who have done a wrong to get a chance, before the society and themselves, to atone, to be cleansed or at least lessen their responsibility by either communicating it or cooperating, in one way or another, with this commission or at least by participating in this kind of gatherings and discussions. (Lazar Stojanović, film director, Belgrade, Serbia, National Consultation with Non-Governmental Organisations, Priština, Kosovo, December 19th 2009.)

RECOM can help to remember the past and the victims. The society owes that to the victims and their families.

The commission can help to remind people of what happened and I think that as human beings we owe it to those who were victims at a certain point in time. In other words, we owe it to those who are no longer with us, but we also owe it to ourselves and the generations that will come after us. Because of that, after all, it is perhaps something that is very humane both for us and the others, and especially the debt owed to those who are no longer with us. It is perhaps the only support which numerous families of the missing persons expect. (Lulzim Arapi, Association for Psycho-social Support to Children, Đakovica/Gjakovë, Kosovo, National Consultation with Non-Governmental Organisations, Priština, Kosovo, December 19th 2009.)

RECOM should concern itself also with the pensioners in Kosovo since Serbia stopped paying their pensions in 1999.

We in Kosovo have new victims too, the victims from after the war. It is common knowledge that there is a grouping, 80,000 individuals: pensioners and invalids, who are not getting their pensions, who are not returned the dues they paid during their working years when they could contribute to the development of manpower, the physical and psychological development of all generations. 80,000 people have been left without any financial support, let alone the psychological aspect and the extent of deformation, degradation, humiliation ... (Nafije Kuqi, Independent Union of Kosovo Pensioners and Invalids, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, National Consultation with Non-Governmental Organisations, Priština, Kosovo, December 19th 2009.)

Some people think that the financing of the commission by the states is not a good idea.

The setting of all this process into motion requires the parliamentary approval and the budgetary solution is also sought from the parliament. Then it will indubitably depend directly on the governments and as a result – it merely follows: it is said that somebody is bad but then his help is sought. And nobody, if he was told that he was bad, will help financially and the solution of this whole problem will become questionable (Atdhe Berisha, Kalaja, Peć, Kosovo, National Consultation with Non-Governmental Organisations, Priština, Kosovo, December 19th 2009.)

The victims will speak more freely if their identity is protected.

I think that it is very important to preserve his/ her [victim's] identity. So, in this regard, the victim's identity when he/she is protected, I mean, not public for the public, he/she can express him/herself more freely. (Bashkim Asllani, Exploring Intelligence, Vučitrn/Vushtrri, Kosovo, National Consultation with Non-Governmental Organisations, Priština, Kosovo, December 19th 2009.)

It is of crucial importance to include teachers and educational institutions in the debate, be it formally or informally.

So, when dealing with all this, how to change the situation, how the approach will change, it is important to include the educational sector, either formally or informally, because it holds the key to the change of relations (Karmit Zysman, National Consultation with Non-Governmental Organisations, Priština, Kosovo, December 19th 2009.)

The victims who will be testifying need to be ensured professional psychological support. The institutions are duty-bound to provide the funds for the rehabilitation of the victims following their testimonies.

[Exposure to] interviews can produce consequences and these can, in their turn, cause further psychological complications. It is important that these persons should not only be called upon to give information but also to receive treatment, [to serve] not only as a source of information; they should be provided treatment if they react in a manner necessitating psychological support. (...) treatment

of traumatised individuals, with the post-traumatic stress, is a long-term process. So, whether there will be one or more sessions... but it is widely known that a number of sessions are required. I am talking about the financial consequences which can ensue if, for instance, a person needs a year-long treatment. It would be good perhaps to talk with institutions here in Kosovo, such as the Ministry for Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health, to find a way for them to help the rehabilitation of these persons after they've been through the interview. (Imri Zabeli, psychologist, Glogovac, Kosovo, National Consultation with Non-Governmental Organisations, Priština, Kosovo, December 19th 2009.)

It is necessary to set up a regional victim support centre. This could be one of RECOM's recommendations.

This means that we need to foresee not only the psycho-social support during the information gathering, taking of statements, but, in point of fact, special psychological support to those victims who will testify in public, and then a programme. It means that the recommendations must be serious and forceful, and later on the coalition must be in a position to monitor the implementation of these recommendations. I really think it is necessary to set up a regional fund for the victims. (Nataša Kandić, Humanitarian Law Centre, Belgrade, Serbia, National Consultation with Non-Governmental Organisations, Priština, Kosovo, December 19th 2009.)

Consultation with the local community

Novi Pazar, Serbia December 21st 2009

Consultations with the local community in Novi Pazar were organized by the Sandžak Committee for Human Rights and Impuls from Tutin. Seventy-one participants, representatives on non-governmental organizations, teachers, cultural workers, and citizens interested in this topic attended the gathering. Sandra Orlović (Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia) and Dragan Popović (Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Serbia) spoke about the need to create RECOM. The gathering was monitored by Frantusanu Iulian, OSCE representatives, Ahmet Halilagić, SCOPEs, Novi Pazar, Head of the USAID Regional Office – Strengthening Economic Stabi-

lity, Marko Vujačić, PR officer for the Development of Municipalities in South-Eastern Serbia Program, PRO and Asmir Coković, Office of the Civilian Friedensdienst Forum from Novi Pazar. TV Jedinstvo and Sandžačke Novine reported on the event.

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations

RECOM is important for Sandžak because of everything that happened in the period from 1991 to 1995: kidnappings, murders, property destruction, and the persecution of the Muslims.

RECOM has a special meaning for Sandžak (...) having in mind everything that happened here from 1991 to 1995, but later too: serious violations of human rights, kidnappings, murder, arson, heavy artillery siege of towns and villages, discrimination, mass persecution of the Muslim population, mass police repression. It was all in the shadow of war events in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo. Many crimes committed in Sandžak remain forgotten (...). The state must investigate the destiny of the victims and give their families relevant information about them. (Semiha Kačar, Sandžak Committee for Human Rights, Novi Pazar, Serbia, Consultations with the local community, Novi Pazar, Serbia, December 21st 2009.)

If we only collect the facts about the crimes committed during and after the war, it would only be a partial success because it is necessary to establish the causes.

If RECOM only collects the facts about the war crimes and serious human rights violations and freedoms committed during and after the war and documents it all, it would be only a partial success because if it is not recorded it did not happen. (Džemal Halilović, Committee for Human Rights Protection and Humanitarian Activity, Priboj, Serbia, Consultations with the local community, Novi Pazar, Serbia, December 21st 2009.)

So, it is necessary to establish the causes because the causes are continuous and they really made the victims be innocent victims. (Mehmed Slezović, Sandžak Intellectual Committee, Novi Pazar, Serbia, Consultations with the local community, Novi Pazar, Serbia, December 21st 2009.)

I believe that we should search for the causes of all

these events in Serbian nationalistic programmes, from 'Načertanije' till today, so, since 150 years ago because the Bosniaks in this region have already suffered almost a dozen genocides and it happens all over again periodically, every 20, 30, or 50 years. If the causes are not removed, i.e. if the state does not give up its nationalistic programmes, the history is likely to repeat in the future. (Džemal Halilović, Committee for Human Rights Protection and Humanitarian Activity, Priboj, Serbia, Consultations with the local community, Novi Pazar, Serbia, December 21st 2009.)

RECOM should investigate the period from the death of Josip Broz Tito and it has to deal with the causes.

I think it would be very good to investigate the events starting immediately after the death of Josip Broz Tito. Anything before that would be just too much. (Šemsudin Kurtović from Tutin, Serbia, Consultations with the local community, Novi Pazar, Serbia, December 21st 2009.)

RECOM offers the victims a space to speak publicly about what happened to them and it offers to the society the necessary support to morally examine the past.

This is an opportunity for the victims to simply have a broader audience to hear about their suffering since justice is slow and the judiciary has many problems that need to be solved.

(...) RECOM can offer them support in a more positive sense but also in a moral sense motivating them to examine the past with a critical point of view. (Mehmed Slezović, Sandžak Intellectual Committee, Novi Pazar, Serbia, Consultations with the local community, Novi Pazar, Serbia, December 21st 2009.)

The accent should be on the protection of civilian victims of war. The government and war profiteers should provide the funds needed for reparations.

Our main interest should be to protect civilian victims of war – provide reparations, compensate the victims or their families (...). The state and war profiteers should provide the funds (...) all those who are today successful businessmen and tycoons (...). And the level of human rights violations in Sandžak was worse than in Kosovo. Here (...) the civilian victims were subjected to torture by, first

of all, state police, secret services, offices of prosecutors, by the judiciary – mainly by the system. (Alija Halilović, Citizens' Forum, Novi Pazar, Serbia, Consultations with the local community, Novi Pazar, Serbia, December 21st 2009.)

For the victims driven from the villages in the Priboj municipality justice means receiving financial compensation and indemnification for their property.

The only way to give (...) these citizens at least some sense of justice (...) is to indemnify them, give them financial compensation because for years they have been unable to visit their properties, they could not work on their land. And all these years they had to pay taxes or they could not have health insurance. (Ekrem Hadžić, Association for the protection of rights of the persecuted and displaced from the Priboj municipality, Consultations with the local community, Novi Pazar, Serbia, December 21st 2009.)

Amnesty for war crimes perpetrators will motivate them to tell us about the crimes victims are not aware of.

It is very important to promise war crimes perpetrators pardon or amnesty for the crimes they are indicted of (...). Public hearings of war crimes perpetrators is very important, maybe even more important than victims' testimonies because victims can tell about their suffering and the perpetrators may tell us what we don't know. (Emir Fetahović, Sandžak Committee for Human Rights, Novi Pazar, Serbia, Consultations with the local community, Novi Pazar, Serbia, December 21st 2009.)

Victims' families expect RECOM to help punish the perpetrators, to find the bodily remains of their loved ones, and to protect them from further humiliation.

We expect this commission to speed up court proceedings for all perpetrators, to help us find the remains, and to help parents of these victims to die a dignified death. (Nail Kajević, Association of the families of the persons kidnapped in Štrpci, Prijepolje, Serbia, Consultations with the local community, Novi Pazar, Serbia, December 21st 2009.)

RECOM has a potential to build a value system acceptable for everyone in the region.

RECOM should try to create a value system acceptable for everyone in the region. (Dušan Nicević, International University in Novi Pazar, Serbia, Consultations with the local community, Novi Pazar, Serbia, December 21st 2009.)

Media coverage is important for the affirmation of the commission, but RECOM should investigate the role of the media in spreading hatred and intolerance.

Victims testifying before the ICTY are often ashamed by the reports from the trials at The Hague. Their role is multiple: they can help spread the word about RECOM, but they can also spread hatred and intolerance. In order to leave the past it is necessary to have the media with an independent relationship with respect to the crimes and victims in this country. (Šaban Šarenkapić, Damad Cultural Center, Novi Pazar, Serbia, Consultations with the local community, Novi Pazar, Serbia, December 21st 2009.)

It is necessary to find a way to change the role of the media.

The fact that the states did not do anything justifies the regional character of RECOM. RECOM is a natural response to that fact (...). I agree that RECOM should include the entire system, including the media which contributed to the blossoming of fascist ideas in society. These media outlets should be included in the process of removing these bad influences from society. (Sabina Talović, Women in Black, Pljevlja, Montenegro, Consultations with the local community, Novi Pazar, Serbia, December 21st 2009.)

Public hearings of victims are an important activity for RECOM but it will only be effective if national TV stations broadcast it.

Further on, public hearings of victims are absolutely important but they must be broadcast on TV stations with national frequencies. There is no point covering these events only by local media, because the national media have aired things back in the 1990s and made people do what they did. (Muharem Mutavdžija, TV Polimlje, Serbia, Consultations with the local community, Novi Pazar, Serbia, December 21st 2009.)

Children are being brought up and educated by listening to the lies about the past.

Evil has been planted in textbooks and we, those of us educating children, we violate children's basic rights every day. (Kemal Džemić, Gest - Association of citizens from Tutin, Serbia, Consultations with the local community, Novi Pazar, Serbia, December 21st 2009.)

RECOM should make a difference between ideologies inspiring the crime and genocide and ordinary ideologies.

The commission cannot be neutral with respect to different ideologies (...) but it can differentiate between ideologies inspiring hatred, killing, ethnic cleansing if that is a euphemism for the crime, for genocide, and so on. We have to make a difference between that and an ordinary ideology. (Ramiz Crnišanin, Sandžak Intellectual Circle, Novi Pazar, Serbia, Consultations with the local community, Novi Pazar, Serbia, December 21st 2009.)

RECOM should have offices in communities where crimes have been committed.

This commission should by all means have an office in Novi Pazar since it is the heart of the Sandžak and since there are many victims in need of help. (Nazim Halilović, Forum for Tolerance and Cohabitation, Tutin, Serbia, Consultations with the local community, Novi Pazar, Serbia, December 21st 2009.)

For practical reasons I believe that RECOM should have offices in areas where most crimes and human rights violations happened. I specifically think of Priboj and its vicinity because mass crimes happened there, ethnic cleansing, in one word an exodus, which resulted in a change in the demographic structure of the region since more than a half of the Bosniak population moved away. (Džemal Halilović, Committee for Human Rights Protection and Humanitarian Activity, Priboj, Serbia, Consultations with the local community, Novi Pazar, Serbia, December 21st 2009.)

RECOM is the only way to reach the truth and to treat victims as human beings and not as members of some ethnic groups. In order for the commission to work independently, it is critical to select professionals with high ethical standards.

This is the right way to find the truth (...) but it is very important to choose the right individuals to be

members of the commission. It is imperative that they are professionally and morally credible because that will have the biggest impact on the work of the commission. And secondly (...) to find a way to start treating victims as human beings regardless of the ethnic group they belong to. (Slobodan Martinović, Argument, Prijepolje, Serbia, Consultations with the local community, Novi Pazar, Serbia, December 21st 2009.)

It is very important for the Bosniaks that all citizens are equal before the law.

When it comes to reconciliation, I don't know who we should make peace with, which is one of the goals of RECOM. The Bosniaks in Sandžak did not have any disputes with anyone, we did not make a single Serbian child cry, we did not harm anyone, and we should not make peace with anyone. We only want this government to treat us like all other citizens, in accordance with the law. (Džemal Halilović, Committee for Human Rights Protection and Humanitarian Activity, Priboj, Serbia, Consultations with the local community, Novi Pazar, Serbia, December 21st 2009.)

RECOM should initiate and recommend psycho-social, work, and family rehabilitation of victims.

Would it be possible for RECOM to somehow help the victims, to tackle the issue of victims' rehabilitation (...)? What are the options to really help them through psycho-social, work, and family rehabilitation? There is very little talk about that and it is really very important because in addition to more substantial life problems, many people have to cope with these issues, too. The government does not pay attention to that, the courts don't care about it. So I was hoping that maybe RECOM may address this issue. (Edin Jusović from Tutin, Serbia, Consultations with the local community, Novi Pazar, Serbia, December 21st 2009.)

The state financed the police that tortured people and nurtured an affirmative relationship with respect to the crimes they committed. These are the main obstacles in creating RECOM.

These people were kidnapped and tortured by the state police, the state financed it, and I think it is going to be very difficult to convince them to create RECOM since they have for so long condoned the

crimes the police committed. (Sedat Vrcić, Flores, Sjenica, Consultations with the local community, Novi Pazar, Serbia, December 21st 2009.)

It is going to be very difficult to win the confidence of the victims and motivate them to talk.

When I say victims, I mean people who are direct victims, who were directly affected, who were tortured (...). I think these people are not heard enough and it will be very difficult to win their trust and motivate them to talk about their suffering. (Omer Bronja, Urban In, Novi Pazar, Serbia, Consultations with the local community, Novi Pazar, Serbia, December 21st 2009.)

Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM

**Zaječar, Serbia
December 22nd 2009**

Consultation with the local community in Zaječar was organized by the non-governmental organization Zaječar Initiative. The gathering was attended by 30 participants, human rights activists, citizens, members of political parties, representatives of the local self-rule of the towns of Zaječar, Knjaževac, and Bor, representatives of national minorities, members of the judiciary, educators, etc. The Initiative for RECOM was represented by Maja Stojanović (Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Serbia) and Milanka Šaponja-Hadžić (Humanitarian Law Centre, Serbia). Local media reported about the gathering.

Suggestions, opinions, and recommendations of participants

Parliaments should form the regional commission because it would instigate a broader discussion and more opinions.

We think that we need to have official support. I think that the parliaments should form the commission because it would mean a broader discussion, a more comprehensive debate and more opinions. If a commission is formed by a presidential decree, it may be understood as an act of nepotism in this region... (Srećko Čeferjanović, Municipal Committee of the Democratic Party in Zaječar,

Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Zaječar, Serbia, December 22nd 2009.)

RECOM should not deal with distant past. Tackling the events from the period before 1989 would only relativize the crimes. The report should present the crimes on a municipal level, where they happened.

I think the time period RECOM should be investigating is 1991-2001 because the commission should also deal with the events in Slovenia and Macedonia – I mentioned the year 2001 because of the events in Macedonia. Also, I think that we should make the reports on the municipal level, where the crimes happened. (Dragana Nikolić, Civic Initiative Committee, Niš, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Zaječar, Serbia, December 22nd 2009.)

I think we should focus on the events starting in 1989, and not before. What happened before that would just relativize all this. I think that is a job for historians, not for this commission. (Zoran Stanković, Municipal Committee of the Liberal Democratic Party in Zaječar, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Zaječar, Serbia, December 22nd 2009.)

I think that we need to include the period before 1991 because no historical event can be viewed as an isolated occurrence, because we need to understand the events in Preševska Dolina. (Čedomir Vranjanac from Zaječar, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Zaječar, Serbia, December 22nd 2009.)

The only possible task of the regional commission is to collect the facts and it should by no means give a legal interpretation of war crimes.

I am convinced that this commission should only establish the facts and nothing else (...) only the judiciary can make a legal assessment of crimes in accordance with existing laws, the Constitution, and international legal acts. The commission must not do it. (Andreja Rajković, Timok newspaper, Zaječar, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Zaječar, Serbia, December 22nd 2009.)

The commission should deal with both the facts and the causes of war.

The commission should deal with both the facts and the causes of war, (...) and it says here (...) with reconciliation, too. OK, I will call it that because we need to understand the fact that these people did not start fighting each other just like that, but that they were influenced by a serious nationalistic propaganda and if we manage to clarify these causes, it would be easier for everyone to get a real understanding of what we did to each other. (Srećko Čeferjanović, Municipal Committee of the Democratic Party in Zaječar, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Zaječar, Serbia, December 22nd 2009.)

I think that history as a science must speak about the facts and the causes of these wars and the commission should speak about the facts and the causes from its point of view. The course of the events is necessary so that the genesis of the war is understood, and also we need a list of all victims. I think that it should be the most important role of this commission and I personally believe that it should operate on the national and regional level. (Čedomir Vranjanac from Zaječar, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Zaječar, Serbia, December 22nd 2009.)

The commission should investigate the plight of the Roma people in this war.

It is terrifying to see the percentage of the Roma people who lost lives in this war compared to what percent of the total population they make. And when you compare that to the number of sons of high ranking government officials or doctors who lost their lives – well, you'll realize that something is terribly wrong and that not everybody was treated the same by their own people. (Sava Smailović, Timok Roma Centre from Zaječar, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Zaječar, Serbia, December 22nd 2009.)

RECOM is a good opportunity for victims to learn where their loved ones are, who the war crimes perpetrators are and why they did what they did in order to be able to go on with their lives.

Also, I would like to add that RECOM is very important for the victims because many people are tired of taking part in such events, telling their stories for various TV stations, talking to institutions without any goal in mind or without any gain for themselves

in the end. This is a good opportunity for them to find out what happened to their loved ones, who the perpetrators are and why they did it, so that they can move on with their lives. (Srećko Čeferjanović, Municipal Committee of the Democratic Party in Zaječar, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Zaječar, Serbia, December 22nd 2009.)

The debate on the regional commission should include non-parliamentary parties and veterans' organizations.

There are no representatives of non-parliamentary political parties and they have two and a half million voters (...) as opposed to one million signatures you want to collect. They are much stronger than you already. Also, I don't see members of veteran's organizations here. (Andreja Rajković, Timok newspaper, Zaječar, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Zaječar, Serbia, December 22nd 2009.)

Including the veterans and former detention camp inmates individually and through their associations will bring more truth to the process.

I believe that it is a good idea to include veterans as much as possible in the process. I suppose many of them were indoctrinated by the regime and they went where they were sent. I personally know at least a dozen people from Zaječar county who were either in detention camps or in the war zone. They can help a great deal by telling us what they went through. (Dejan Zdravković, Municipal Committee of the Liberal Democratic Party, Zaječar, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Zaječar, Serbia, December 22nd 2009.)

The commission should also deal with "our own victims" who suffered due to the negligence of their superiors.

What criteria are you going to apply in determining the war crime and the war victim? Is RECOM going to deal with those who became victims through the will of their superiors? For example, if a superior officer ordered his men to drive a truck through a mine field, fully aware that it was a mine field, whose victims are these men? (Sava Smailović, Timok Roma Centre from Zaječar, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the

Initiative for RECOM, Zaječar, Serbia, December 22nd 2009.)

Young people should be informed and included in the million signatures campaign.

There are many young people who have no knowledge whatsoever about the war events from the 1990s and it is really necessary to inform them and include them through civil society organizations in the process of establishing RECOM. (Maja Stojanović, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Zaječar, Serbia, December 22nd 2009.)

I really find it worrying that my peers have no idea about what happened on the territory of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s and I think that you should pay more attention to this problem and work on finding ways to inform them about it properly. (Siniša Kodicović, Negotin Grammar School, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Zaječar, Serbia, December 22nd 2009.)

It is important to clarify the role and the responsibility of all state security services for war crimes committed during the wars of the 1990s.

State security services from all over the region should be investigated because we all know that they are responsible for everything that happened. The people did not do these crimes on their own, the crimes were committed by ideologies and individuals inspired by these crimes (...). I think that's the key element in finding the truth (...) because these security services were primary instigators of everything that escalated later. (Miodrag Milošević, The Town of Bor Improvement Workshop, Bor, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Zaječar, Serbia, December 22nd 2009.)

RECOM should tackle the issue of human rights violations in Sandžak in the 1990s.

What was going on in Sandžak in the 1990s can also be categorized as war crimes. These were not direct war crimes but you all know that citizens of Sandžak of Muslim nationality were tortured by the police, not by the paramilitaries, although they

did it too, that is a fact. The police took people in for questioning and so on. That is not a war crime as such, but that should also be punished. (Dragana Nikolić, Civic Initiative Committee, Niš, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Zaječar, Serbia, December 22nd 2009.)

Each state should form its own commission and there should be a regional commission to overlook the work of national commissions.

Each state should form its own commission and there should be a commission which is superior to all these national commissions, but only if that commission can be objective and unbiased. (Marko Ristić, Municipal Administration of the Municipality of Knjaževac, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Zaječar, Serbia, December 22nd 2009.)

Experts in different fields should be included in the work of the commission.

And this commission should definitely be made up of experts in the field of history, sociology, psychology, and other fields (...). Also, young people should be included, people who took part in the conflict, citizens who are interested in this topic, etc. All crimes should be clarified and we, the Union of Romany in Serbia, we want to give our contribution to that. (Bojko Stanković, Dunav, Union of Romany in Serbia, Zaječar, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Zaječar, Serbia, December 22nd 2009.)

So, I believe that the commission, first of all, should be made up of experts, professionals in different fields and also, I think that this commission cannot do it all. I think that there should be more commissions and this one should be a higher commission and they should all work together in order to find the facts. (Sava Smailović, Timok Roma Centre from Zaječar, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Zaječar, Serbia, December 22nd 2009.)

RECOM should also deal with victims of the NATO bombardment and investigate whether non-conventional ammunition was used during the operation.

It is my personal belief that the killing of (...) inno-

cent civilians during the NATO intervention in Serbia should be investigated. There is the case of the bombing of the convoy of refugees, then the case of the train, and some other cases that should be investigated and considered as war crimes because they were committed during the war. Also, the use

of cassette bombs which are banned by the international humanitarian law constitutes a war crime. (Srećko Čeferjanović, Municipal Committee of the Democratic Party in Zaječar, Serbia, Consultation with the local community on the Initiative for RECOM, Zaječar, Serbia, December 22nd 2009.)

Publisher:

Humanitarian Law Center

For the Publisher:

Nataša Kandić

Print run:

600

Printing house:

Publikum

Belgrade, March 2010

CIP - Каталогизација у публикацији
Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

341.323.5(497.1)"1991/1999"

**CONSULTATIVE Process on the RECOM
initiative : an overview of thoughts,
suggestions and recommendations** : July -
December 2009 / [organized by] Coalition for
RECOM. - Belgrade : Humanitarian Law Center,
2010 (Belgrade : Publicum). - 127 str. ; 27 cm

Tiraž 600.

ISBN 978-86-7932-020-9

1. Coalition for RECOM

а) Ратни злочини - Југославија - 1991-1999

COBISS.SR-ID 173892108