

Alija Izetbegović's speech delivered at the Dayton Peace Accords signing ceremony at the Elysee Palace in Paris, 14th December 1995

“President Chirac, President Clinton, Secretary-General of the United Nations, presidents, heads of governments, your excellencies, ministers, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank the French state for playing host to this all-important conference, and I would like to thank France for their kind hospitality. I would like to thank all those in attendance today for having made this conference possible. And more particularly I would like to pay tribute to the American government, to the American Congress and to President Clinton for their endeavors past, present and future so that war be brought to an end in this region and so that peace be ushered in.

We came here to sign the Peace Agreement which we had initialized in Dayton some 20 days ago.

Our people and our Parliament have accepted this Accord. They did this without enthusiasm, like a man taking a bitter but useful medicine. Still, I wish to assure you of our determination to consistently and honourably put the signed Contract and all of its components into action.

Our goal was and is an integral and democratic Bosnia. Provisions of the Agreement guarantee this, but whether these provisions become live or remain a dead letter on paper for this moment greatly depends on us, on what we want and what we can do. The battle for these goals is not lost, nor is it won. It goes on through other peaceful means, not with weapons of power, which we were deprived of, but with the power of ideas and spirit. We believed and claimed that our model of a multinational community and open society was superior and that it could not lose. Now is the time to prove this to ourselves as well as to others.

With these thoughts we are sending a message to the Serbs that the war is over and that evil is to stop. We again declare that there is no revenge or payback, but that there is and should be justice. Human rights must be established everywhere. Banished persons have rights to their homes and the culpable have the right to their punishment. This because punishment is the human right of a criminal.

The Serbs around Sarajevo should be given a choice: to leave or to stay. We invite them to stay and go on living in safety. The only condition is that they respect the laws of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which order freedom and forbid violence. Let them help their neighbours return to their homes and let them cooperate with the legal authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in establishing law and order. We will ask IFOR and international organizations to mediate in

making contact on all levels during the transition period so that the rules of the agreement signed today be implemented in whole.

We call upon the world to help Bosnia in this historic moment. Send your troops to implement the peace contract and fulfill your promises regarding economic help for the country's reconstruction; Bosnia will return this favour to you in the best way it can, by becoming a factor of peace and stability in this part of the world.

Thank you.”