

## **Regional Consultation with Intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM**

Banja Luka, BiH  
September 4, 2010

A regional consultation with intellectuals was organized by the BH Journalists Association and the Center for Legal and Informational Assistance from Zvornik. The consultation was attended by a total of 42 participants and guests. Lazar Stojanović from the Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia, moderated the discussion. The consultation was reported on by various media outlets in the country, including BH TV, Nezavisne Novine, ONASA, and BHRT – HT 1. A debate which was aired on ATV was held prior to the consultation and featured the participant guests Arsim Gerxhaliu (Kosovo), Slavko Kukić, Ismet Sejfića, Mladen Mirosavljević, and Srđan Puhalo (BiH), Žarko Puhovski (Croatia), and Želimir Žilnik and Lazar Stojanović (Serbia).

### **Comments, Suggestions, and Recommendations of the Participants at the Consultation:**

**The interest of different media outlets in the Initiative for RECOM is directly proportional to the influence of the politicians controlling the outlets.**

*Most media outlets are under the direct control of certain politicians and they report on RECOM-related events accordingly.* (Dženana Karup-Druško, Coordinator of the Consultation Process on the Initiative for RECOM, BiH, Regional Consultation with Intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, BiH, September 4, 2010).

**Some politicians don't need RECOM because they want to avoid dealing with the past if at all possible.**

*Why do some politicians think that we don't need this initiative? There's only one answer – they want us all to avoid dealing with the past because they don't need the truth, they need nationalism.* (Dženana Karup-Druško, Coordinator of the Consultation Process on the Initiative for RECOM, BiH, Regional Consultation with Intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, BiH, September 4, 2010).

**We should conduct research on how the public perceives the Initiative for RECOM.**

*(...) did we conduct research on how the media perceives the Initiative for RECOM (...) It is irrelevant if the perception is negative or positive, as long as we know what we are up against we'll know how to influence this perception and change it to become positive.* (Mladen Mirosavljević, Professor, NUBL Faculty, Banja Luka, BiH, Regional Consultation with Intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, BiH, September 4, 2010).

**There was no research on the perception of the Initiative for RECOM in the media, but press clippings on the Initiative are being carefully analysed.**

*We did not conduct any such research (...) because it is very expensive and the results are short-lived. However, we have our PR staff tasked with collecting press clippings on the Initiative for RECOM and we carefully analyse them. We monitor any changes and we have a pretty clear picture if our image in the public is getting better or worse. And to be quite honest with you, I don't think we would be able to do such research in such a short period of time.* (Lazar

Stojanović, Regional PR Office and Director of the Media Campaign for the Initiative for RECOM, Serbia, Regional Consultation with Intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, BiH, September 4, 2010).

**Non-governmental organizations should not try to avoid “mines.”**

*Those who want to be followed and loved by the people should go into politics. The job of non-governmental organizations is to be hated by the people. I don't see why we need to know how the media look upon us or if the people like us because it is completely irrelevant. The job of non-governmental organizations is to smuggle certain topics to the centre of public attention.* (Žarko Puhovski, Faculty of Philosophy, Zagreb, Croatia, Regional Consultation with Intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, BiH, September 4, 2010).

*(...) it is still necessary, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina (...) to stop avoiding certain topics but to deliberately step on each and every mine and let it explode, hoping that the shock wave will have a positive effect on someone.* (Žarko Puhovski, Faculty of Philosophy, Zagreb, Croatia, Regional Consultation with Intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, BiH, September 4, 2010).

**There are still two “mines” for RECOM in BiH – non-governmental organizations which are seriously influenced by politics, and those who have left the Initiative for RECOM for their own reasons. Those “mines” should be totally ignored.**

*(...) when we talk about Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are two so-called mines (...) one is coming directly from political influence, because some non-governmental organizations are under the influence of certain politicians who strongly oppose the Initiative for RECOM. Those NGOs are being financed from the budget of their respective governments, which makes them subject to direct forms of control. The second type of “mines” RECOM encounters in Bosnia and Herzegovina are those non-governmental organizations which used to be members of the Coalition for RECOM and then left it for various reasons known to them. The Coalition for RECOM should ignore all those “mines” and continue doing its job in the exact same manner as described by professor Puhovski.* (Tanja Topić, Fridrih Ebert Foundation, Banja Luka Office, BiH, Regional Consultation with Intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, BiH, September 4, 2010).

**A large number of non-governmental organizations left the Coalition for RECOM because of financial reasons, i.e. they expected that the Initiative for RECOM would be a very profitable project for them.**

*(...) why did some non-governmental organizations that used to support the Initiative for RECOM, or pretended to, decide to distance themselves from the process and fiercely criticize it? With a few honourable exceptions, I quite responsibly claim that some of the non-governmental organizations did it because they realized that they would not be able to profit from their participation in the Initiative for RECOM. A lot of non-governmental organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina have a history of making profit on such projects.* (Šefika Muratagić, Ključ Budućnosti/Key to the Future Association of Citizens, Ključ, BiH, Regional Consultation with Intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, BiH, September 4, 2010).

**The Initiative for RECOM idea should be “pushed” forward. It needs to be implemented by non-compromising human rights defenders.**

*(...) I salute the idea of RECOM and I think it is an idea that, regardless of all the obstacles it encounters, all the “mines” and rejections mentioned by previous speakers, should be carried out and pushed forward no matter what. However, what I want to say is that non-compromising human rights activists are needed to carry it out; people who were not even scared during the war to voice their opinion, let alone in the period after the war. (Radmilo Golijanin, NGO League for the Protection of Private Property and Human Rights, Trebinje, BiH, Regional Consultation with Intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, BiH, September 4, 2010).*

**An internet website containing the findings of RECOM’s research should be put up as soon as possible.**

*I think that we need to put up a website on the internet as soon as possible which contains the results of RECOM’s investigations so that definite and clear findings are made public (...) That should be stage one of our future investigation, to publish everything on a website. It will cause a debate on the one hand, and on the other hand it will draw in individuals who want to make suggestions. Information posted should include the name of the territory and the name of the town/village where the research was conducted - and I am sure there are plenty of territories where investigations have been conducted. (Želimir Žilnik, Film Director, Novi Sad, Serbia, Regional Consultation with Intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, BiH, September 4, 2010).*

**Little truths RECOM will learn in the process of investigations will open the road to the so-called major truths.**

*(...) we talked about the big truth and the little truths, and those little truths are construed into the collective memory of certain nations in a certain context. They were derived from certain facts, but we should collect all the facts (...) and my children will be able to use the little truths to question the big truth. That’s important for me personally, and that’s a step forward that will count in the future. (Mladena Tadej, Documenta, Zagreb, Croatia, Regional Consultation with Intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, BiH, September 4, 2010).*

**It is imperative to find the missing persons. Individuals need to be prosecuted for the crimes they committed, not an entire nation.**

*(...) the missing persons need to be located because it is a basic thing, to allow for families to know where their dead ones are. When it comes to war crimes, individuals who are responsible for the commitment of war crimes should be held responsible and prosecuted, not entire nations. (Tanja Subotić-Došen, Women’s Active SNSD, Banja Luka, Political Academy Banja Luka, BiH, Regional Consultation with Intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, BiH, September 4, 2010).*

**I support the Initiative for RECOM.**

*I am always ready to support this and any other organization working towards the implementation of this goal. (Milovan Dragojević, student at the Faculty of Political Science, Banja Luka, BiH, Regional Consultation with Intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, BiH, September 4, 2010).*

*I like this initiative because I think its long-term results will be quite positive, and I think that today we can't even grasp the importance of its work.* (Srđan Puhalo, psychologist, Banja Luka, BiH, Regional Consultation with Intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, BiH, September 4, 2010).

*I am very satisfied with this gathering, and I support the Initiative for RECOM.* (San Makarević, ToPeeR, Doboj, BiH, Regional Consultation with Intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, BiH, September 4, 2010).

**RECOM will help us avoid the recurrence of tragic events.**

*I think that the results achieved during RECOM's mandate will also help us find the causes of the conflict, and then we can be pretty sure that such tragic things will not happen again.* (Safet Muratagić, Ključ Budućnosti/Key to the Future Association of Citizens, Ključ, BiH, Regional Consultation with Intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, BiH, September 4, 2010).

**It is necessary to commend those who helped members of other nationalities who were in life-threatening situations.**

*(...) we must not forget the good examples. There are many people who helped members of other nationalities who had to flee or were in any other kind of a life-threatening situation. Those people should be named and commended. They need to be put on special list because that is quite a contribution.* (Biljana Bjelaković, ToPeeR, Doboj, BiH, Regional Consultation with Intellectuals on the Initiative for RECOM, Banja Luka, BiH, September 4, 2010).