Srebrenica Commemoration, Srebrenica, Bosnia & Herzegovina

Remarks by President Wolfowitz
July 11, 2005

Mothers of Srebrenica, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Es salaamu alaykum wa rahmatullah wa barakatu – Peace unto you and God’s mercy and God’s blessing

We’re here today for many reasons, but most of all we are here to remember and honor the victims of the worst act of genocide in Europe since the World War II. Equally we are here to console the survivors and to commit ourselves to do everything we can to help them to rebuild shattered lives.

The brutal way in which wives were separated from husbands, and mothers were separated from sons have left scars that will never heal. Two years ago I was here at this cemetery and spoke with a mother who had survived and who said that at her age she should be waiting for her grandchildren to arrive. Instead her one hope was that the bones of her husband and her two sons will be recovered and the work here to recover remains is an important commitment we have to the survivors.

We are also here to renew our resolve not to let such atrocities scar this land again. Criminals who did this act are the ones who bear responsibility, but it is a stain upon the conscience of the entire world, that we did not do more to prevent it. Those who perpetrated these crimes must be brought to justice. This is not only to deter future crimes, but it is a critical precondition to begin the healing and the reconciliation among the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina within the region of South Eastern Europe.

It is hard to be optimistic in this place, but finally we are also here to express our hopes that all citizens of this country will use this opportunity not only to reflect on the past but to commit to building a brighter future. I am deeply impressed with the progress that Bosnia has made in the past decade in the face of massive tragedy.

Yesterday I had the privilege of meeting with a group of young people in Sarajevo – young people of all ethnic backgrounds and mixes of ethnic backgrounds, but there was literally no difference in the desires that they expressed. They all hope for better education, for better jobs, for the ability to know the wonderful continent of Europe on which they live and the rest of the world.

I am proud that the World Bank has been able to participate in building a better future for this country and I appeal to everyone here today to stand together to make the dreams of this young generation a reality. Let us draw strength and determination from a resolve that the horrible events which we are commemorating here today in Srebrenica must never be repeated.

Thank you.