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BELGRADE

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Respected Sirs:

It is with great pleasure and deep conviction that I express my support for the nomination of Prof. Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, a leading Bosnian intellectual and one of the most prominent civic leaders in the Balkan region, who I have known for many years, for the World Interfaith Harmony Week Prize. My support particularly come with regard to his initiative for a conference on "Intellectual perspectives on interfaith relations in the contemporary world" to be held to mark the upcoming UN Interfaith Harmony Week in Sarajevo, which will include not just an academic meeting but a number of public events to raise awareness of the Week itself, of the importance of interfaith harmony, and of progress achieved in the Balkans generally and Bosnia and Herzegovina more particularly over the past twenty years. This will be the first such event to be held in Bosnia or, to my knowledge, in the region. This is simply the most recent initiative what may fairly be called his gigantic mission – Multi-confessional Dialogue and Religious Reconciliation in the Former Yugoslavia, a process to which he has made exceptional contributions over the past twenty years.

I would in particular point to his brilliant writings and pacifist works, which have been translated worldwide and published in a many different languages. As a luminary Muslim scholar and prominent expert on contemporary Islamic thought, he has published more than 20 books in Bosnian, 12 of which have been published in English, French, Italian, and Turkish translations. He is also the author of several hundred academic articles and essays written from the standpoint of love, friendship, and cooperation. He was among the first scholars to articulate a peaceful idea of a Bosnia and Herzegovina based on the ideas of individual freedom and democracy, grounded on mutual respect between all citizens and between all ethnic and confessional groups.

I have also been involved in activities organized by one of the most influential and respected NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, *International forum Bosnia*, led by its President, Rusmir