

critical appreciation of the work of Bosnia's most important poet, Mak Dizdar, as a representative of that tradition, *Maintaining the Sacred Centre*, an essay on the destruction of tradition and interfaith coexistence in one Bosnian town by the modern ideological movements, and a new edition of the author's classic work, *Bosanski odgovor* (Learning from Bosnia), a systematic presentation of the Bosnian tradition of religious coexistence as a response to the ideological challenges of modernity and fundamentalism. His work will be discussed by a panel of speakers from each of the main religious traditions present in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We believe this will provide a very valuable opportunity to draw attention to a unique body of work, the culmination of a lifetime's study and profound thought, which provides a highly valuable model for the critical reconstruction of interfaith relations in an increasingly globalized world.

In the evening there will be a musical performance drawing on the sacral music of all four religious traditions.

These activities planned to mark the World Interfaith Harmony Week are highly representative of Prof. Mahmutćehajić's efforts over the past twenty years and more, both individually and through the non-governmental organization he founded to promote the understanding of Bosnia as the common home of four interrelated and inextricable traditions and communities, the International Forum Bosnia. As a leading Bosnian intellectual and advocate of peaceful coexistence and good interfaith relations, Prof. Mahmutćehajić has been a major force in the restoration of cultural and intellectual life in Bosnia and Herzegovina since the war that ended in 1995 and has been personally responsible for initiating a large number of projects aimed at increasing understanding and appreciation of the country's complex religious and cultural heritage, work in which we have all been involved in different capacities at different times and which we can categorically state would not have taken place without his leadership. These projects include the physical reconstruction and restoration of national monuments and heritage destroyed during the war, including a large number of sacral buildings from the various faiths present in Bosnia and Herzegovina, annual international summer schools held in the town of Stolac with youth participants and teaching staff from all the Abrahamic traditions, and the annual international conferences organized at Mostar on the theme of Unity and Plurality in Europe, one of whose aims every year is to explore interfaith dialogue, bringing together scholars and academics from the Balkans, Israel, Turkey, the Near East, Libya, Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Finland, Norway, Poland, the UK and the USA, etc. These summer schools and conferences provide practically the only opportunity in Bosnia for individuals of the various faith communities to come together with leading thinkers from around the region and the world and to develop new paths to coexistence. This programme of events includes activities renovating and reconstructing cultural monuments and heritage (including buildings and portable and intangible heritage such as manuscripts, antiques, and traditional skills and crafts). These activities incorporate physical reconstruction and work to rediscover and renew our understanding of traditions and of the place and importance of human dignity within traditional and religious world-views.

We therefore wholeheartedly support the nomination of Prof. Mahmutćehajić for your prize and look forward to celebrating World Interfaith Harmony Week together with him in February next year,

Yours sincerely,



Desmond Maurer

Chair of the Centre for Historical Studies,
International Forum Bosnia