

Report on the 10th Sarajevo UN World Interfaith Harmony Week

From International Forum Bosnia, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

International Forum Bosnia organized the 10th Sarajevo UN World Interfaith Harmony Week this year, marking a full decade of events held in the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina in response to the appeal by the UN General Assembly session held on October 20, 2010 to member-states, inviting them to organize programmes during the first week of February each year that contribute to the understanding of religious plurality and build trust between the component elements of that plurality.

The key themes of this year's programme are summed up in the title:

Politics, Religion, and Tolerance.

This year's theme was chosen because it reflects the urgent need for dialogue at the interface of politics and religion in Bosnia and Herzegovina 30 years after the outbreak of the war against the country in 1992, at a time when tensions and the potential for renewed conflict have been rising, not least because of international pressures and changing geopolitical realities, both regionally and on the broader global scene. As so often, it is the identity nexus, which draws in a tight knot the threads of ethnicity, culture and heritage, religious affiliation, and political identification, that responds most sensitively to the growing tensions in society and manipulation of them by various interests, both domestic and foreign. As always, the answer is in greater dialogue, understanding, and tolerance, so long as it is based on a real recognition of and respect for difference and the constitutive role of difference in the establishment of essentially plural communities – the only type now possible in the modern world on any humane or indeed human basis.

Given the continued restrictions on public meetings because of the coronavirus and associated measures, the programme took place on Zoom, with daily panels running from 14:00 hours to 17:00 hours each day, from Monday, 7 February, to Friday, 11 February. The panel on the first day was preceded by the inaugural session, while the panel on the final day was followed by the closing session. The timetable ran as follows:

- **Opening Session**
seven February (Monday, from 14:00 – 15:00h.
- **First Panel on *Politics, Religion, and Tolerance***
7 February (Monday), from 15:00 – 17:00h.
- **Second Panel on *Religious Plurality and the Formative Books of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Traditions***
8 February (Tuesday), from 14:00 – 16:00h.
- **Third Panel on *Hatred, Celebrating Atrocities, and Intolerance in Ethno-Nationalist Ideologies***
9 February (Wednesday), from 14:00 – 16:00h.
- **Fourth Panel on *The Sacred in Bosnian Cultural Heritage, I***
10 February (Thursday), from 14:00 – 16:00h.
- **Fifth Panel on *The Sacred in Bosnian Cultural Heritage, II***

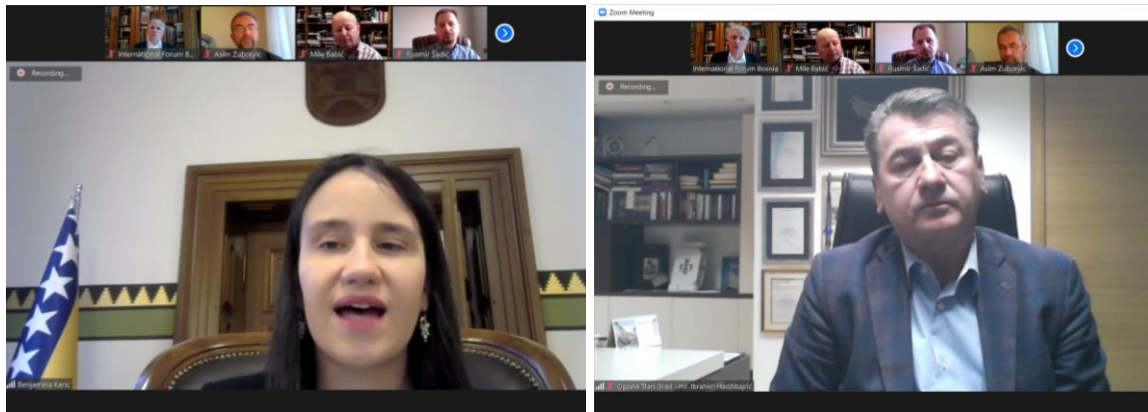
11 February (Friday), from 14:00 – 16:00h.

Each of the panels involved a number of invited speakers, each of whom gave a talk of approximately 15 minutes. This was then followed by the questions posed by panel members to each other or by members of the audience. Each of the sessions was attended by between 20 and 30 members of the public/members of International Forum Bosnia.

The opening session took place, as planned, between 14:00 and 15:00 hours on 7 February.

We were honoured with a message from the presiding member of the joint presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, H. E. Željko Komšić, to open the proceedings. President Komšić had intended to deliver the address himself, but was unfortunately unable to do so in person because of official business.

This was followed by personal addresses by the Right Honourable Mayor of the city of Sarajevo, Benjamina Karić, and the Mayor of Old Town municipality, Ibrahim Hadžibajrić.

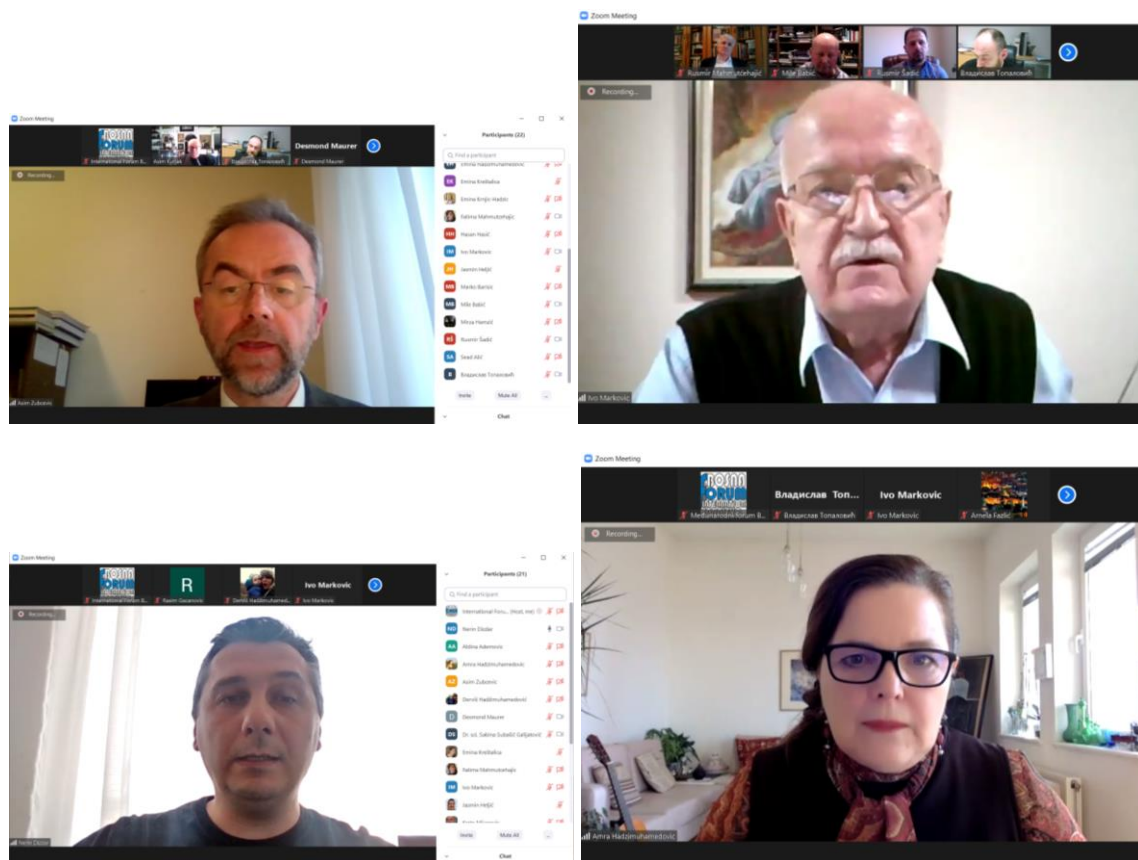


All three spoke of the importance of interfaith dialogue, particularly for the city of Sarajevo and for Bosnia and Herzegovina as enabling frameworks for all their people, of whatever mixtures of background, faith, and identity. All reiterated their support for World Interfaith Harmony Week and for the activities of International Forum Bosnia in promoting it over the past decade.

As announced, there was an also inaugural address by the president of International Forum Bosnia, Prof Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, on the topic of *Religious Pluralism and Social Capital*.



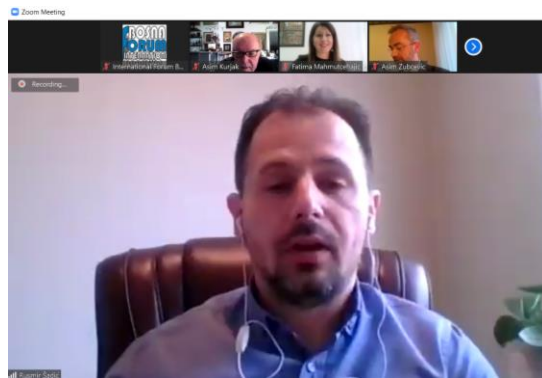
The panel moderators, Asim Zubčević, Ivo Marković, Krsto Mijanović, Amra Hadžimuhamedović, also briefly presented the panels to be held later that day and on each of the subsequent days of the week and the topics to be addressed.



This was followed by the *First Panel*, which was on the topic of *Politics, Religion, and Tolerance*. The moderator, Prof Asim Zubčević of the Sarajevo Faculty of Islamic Studies, introduced the four panellists and their topics:

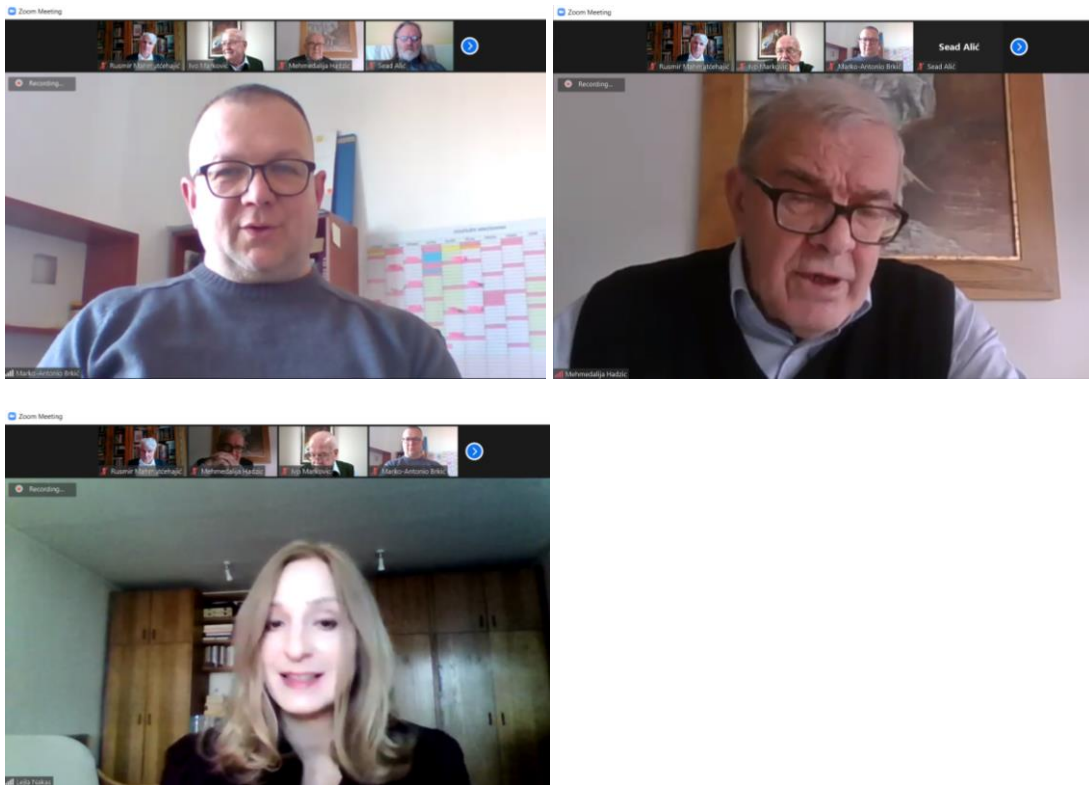
- Vladislav Topalović, from the Orthodox Theological Faculty in Foča, who, instead of on the pre-announced topic of *Christian Views of Love*, spoke on Secularisation and Ecumenism, particularly from the perspective of the Serbian Orthodox Church.
- He was followed by Professor Asim Kurjak of the Universities of Zagreb and Sarajevo, who spoke on the key ethical and legal dilemmas arising as a result of contemporary advances in research into the conception of new life in the womb: when human life actually begins and the rights of the conceived subject. He discussed responses informed by the various religious traditions and by modern secular ideologies.
- Next was Prof Fatima Mahmutćehajić of the Department of Business Law of the Sarajevo University Faculty of Economics, who spoke on *the legal and ethical responsibility of government for building a culture of peace*.

- He was followed by Prof Rusmir Šadić of the Department of Philosophy in the Tuzla University Faculty of Arts and Humanities, who spoke on *Encounter: Towards singular-plural being*.
- Finally Prof Mile Babić OFM of the Franciscan Theological Faculty and Seminary in Sarajevo spoke on the *Bosnian Franciscan understanding of the individual*.



The Second Panel was on *Religious Plurality and the Formative Books of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Traditions* and took place, as planned, on February 8, running from 14.00 – 16.00. The moderator was Prof Ivo Marković, OFM, who introduced the session with a brief presentation of his own on the topic of the panel.

- The first formal speaker was Marko Antonio Brkić of the University of Herzegovina, who spoke on the topic of *The Medjugorean Visions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the world today*.
- He was followed by Prof Mehmedalija Hadžić, formerly of the Institute for the Bosniak Tradition and the Faculty of Islamic Sciences of the University of Sarajevo, who spoke on *Religious plurality and the heritage of the Prophet Muhammad*.
- Prof Igor Kožemjakin, who had been to speak on the topic of *The other and the different in Jewish religious sources*, was unfortunately unable to attend.
- The final panellist was Prof Lejla Nakaš, of the Department of Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian literature of the Sarajevo University Faculty of Humanities and Arts, who spoke on *The Gospels as reflected in mediaeval Bosnian charters*.



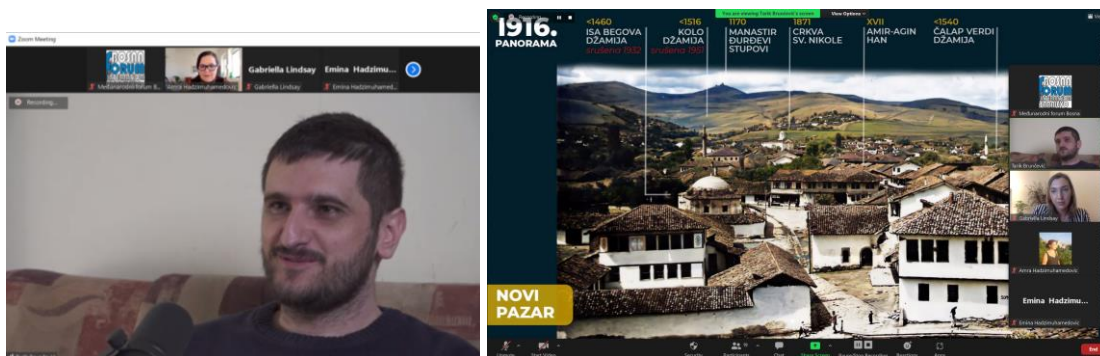
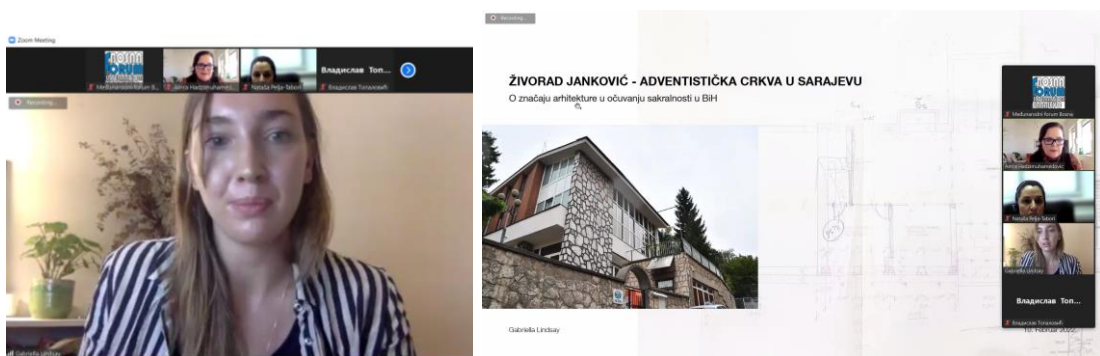
The Third Panel, held on February 9, between 1400 and 16:00, was on *Hatred, Celebrating Atrocities, and Intolerance in Ethno-Nationalist Ideologies*, and was to be moderated by Prof Krsto Mijanović, the vice president of International Forum Bosnia, but because of technical difficulties was actually moderated by the first speaker, Nerin Dizdar, A lecturer in English at the Faculty of Humanities and Arts at Džemal Bijedić University in Mostar.

- Nerin Dizdar spoke on the topic of *Cultural Racism in Ethno-nationalist Ideologies*.
- He was followed by Prof Marko Attila Hoare of the Department of Political Studies of the Sarajevo School of Sciences and Technology, who discussed *Comparing Antisemitic and AntiBosnian ideologies*.
- Next was Desmond Maurer, the Director of the Centre for Historical Studies at International Forum Bosnia, who spoke on *Ethnic-cleansing and the ideology of sacrifice*.
- The final speaker was Dr Sabina Subašić Galijatović of the Institute for Genocide Studies of the University of Sarajevo, who spoke on *Fear and hatred of the other as the source of atrocities*.



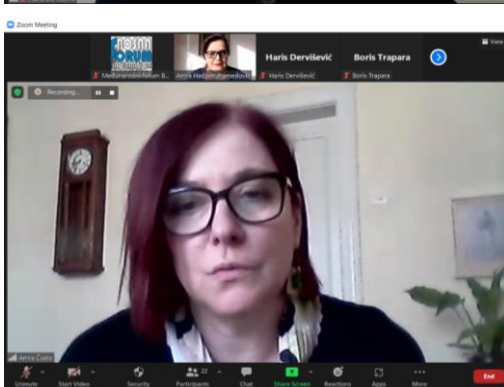
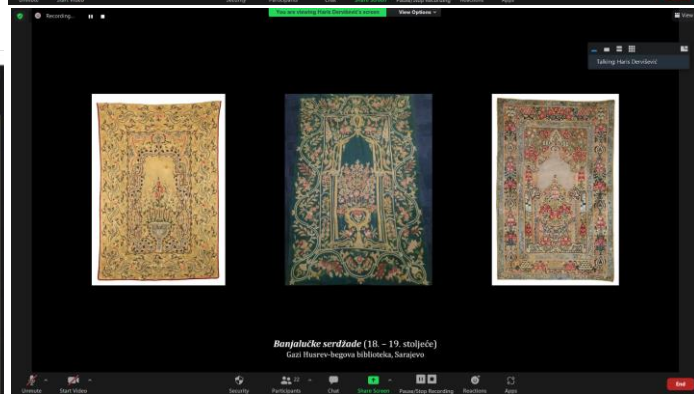
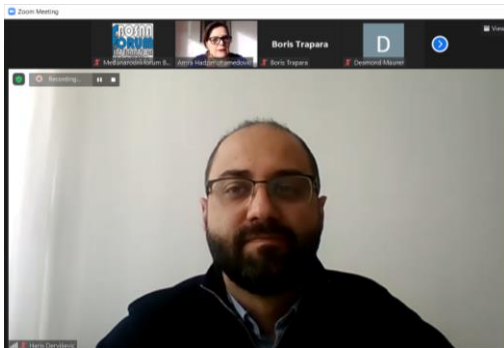
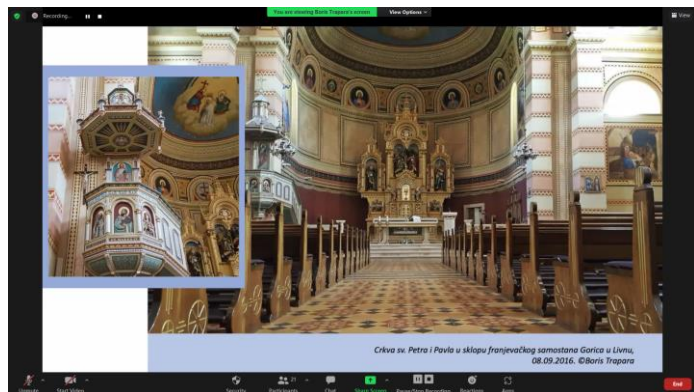
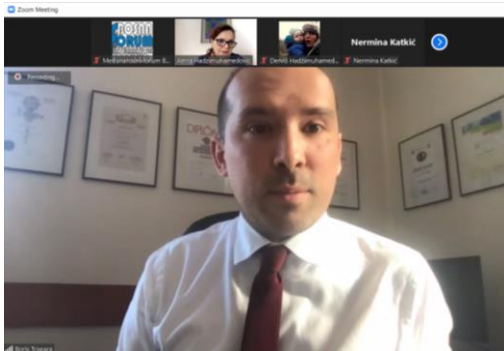
The Fourth Panel took place in her return, between 14:00 and 16:00 hours, and was the first of two panels on the topic of *The Sacred in Bosnian Cultural Heritage*. The moderator of both panels was Prof Amra Hadžimuhamedović, the director of the Centre for Cultural Heritage of International Forum Bosnia.

- The first panellist was Dr Nataša Tabori, Institute for planning of development of the Sarajevo Kanton, who spoke on *Il Kal Grandi in Sarajevo – its history, significance, and future*. This presentation was about the major synagogue built in 20th century in Sarajevo.
- She was followed by Gabriela Lindsay, from the University of Sidney, who spoke on *the architecture and architects (Živorad Janković) of the Adventist Church in Sarajevo*.
- The final speaker of this panel was Prof Tarik Brunčević, architect from Novi Pazar, who gave a presentation on *Novi Pazar's cultural heritage and protection challenges*.

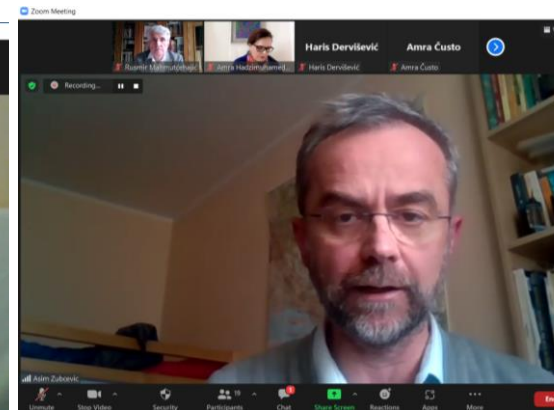
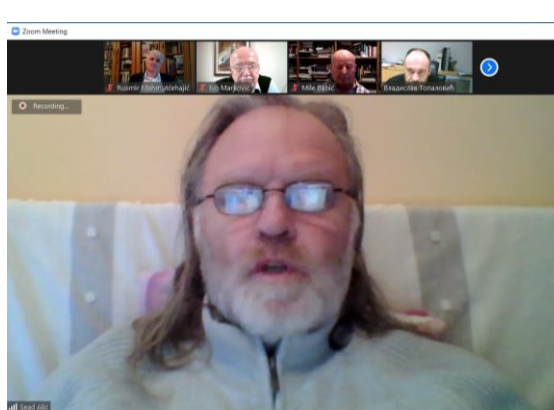
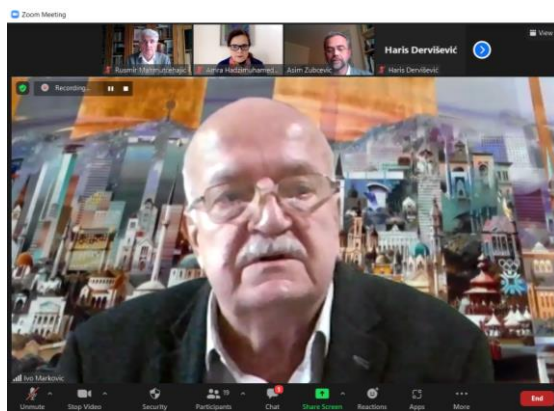
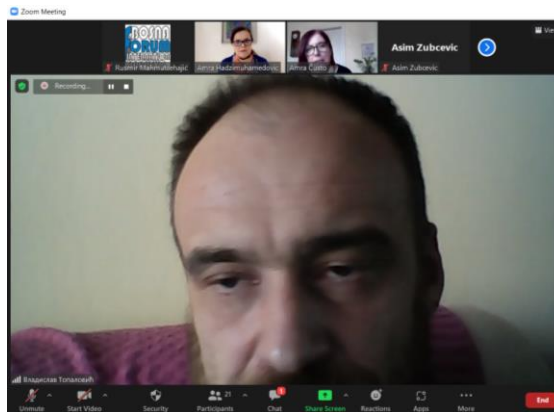
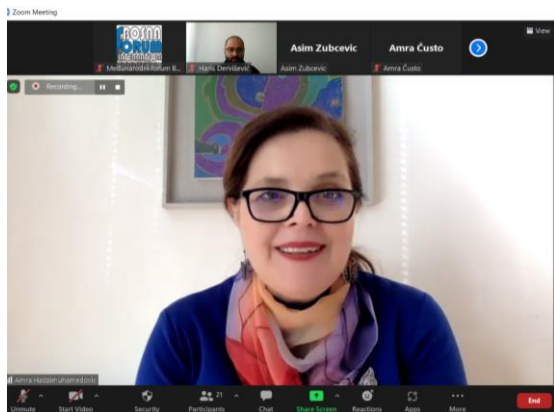


The Fifth Panel took place in every 11, again from 14:00 to 16:00 hours, and resumed the topic of *The Sacred in Bosnian Cultural Heritage*.

- The first speaker was Dr Boris Trapara of the Commission to Protect Monuments of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who presented on the topic of *The Bosnian Franciscan Monasteries during the Austro-Hungarian period*.
- The second speaker was Prof Haris Dervišević, of the Department of Art History of the Sarajevo University Faculty of Humanities and Arts, who discussed *the return of the Banja Luka serdžada or prayer rug in Bosnian cultural memory*.
- The final speaker was Dr Amra Ćusto of the Sarajevo Canton Institute for the Protection of Monuments who spoke on the *Sacralization of Political Ideas – the St Vitus' Day Chapel and the Turbe or Tomb of the Young Bosnians in Sarajevo*.



Each of the panels was followed by a lively discussion between the speakers and some members of the audience, including members of panels on other days.



Closing address

The moderators of the first two and the last two panels presented the themes and contents of their panel, the presentations, and the discussions that followed them. For technical reasons, again, this was not possible for the third panel.

This was followed by a closing address by Prof Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, who requested that the panellists prepare their presentations for publication in article form in *Forum Bosnae*, the journal of International Forum Bosnia.

All the sessions were recorded and will be made available to view on the IFB webpage.

Link:

<http://www.forumbosna.org/report-on-the-10th-sarajevo-un-world-interfaith-harmony-week>

<https://www.preporod.com/index.php/sve-vijesti/drustvo/item/11804-izasao-je-novi-preporod>

<https://www.mreza-mira.net/vijesti/seminari-treninzi/deseta-sarajevo-un-sedmica-medureligijskog-sklada-u-svijetu-politika-religija-i-tolerancija/>

Video conference:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2UXciBaHUQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ugHvD8wS53U>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ToLDHL1CUIE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KO0Yp9Y5Emg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DQIBQZ6iZrg>