

**David Dudge, IPI Director, Speech, Belgrade**

*Mr. President, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I would very much like to welcome you to the opening ceremony of the 57<sup>th</sup> World Congress and General Assembly of the International Press Institute.

I am particularly pleased that the opening ceremony takes place in this stunning parliament with its wonderful atmosphere and architecture.

Mr. President, I would very much like to thank you on behalf of IPI for your willingness to find the time in your busy schedule to meet with us.

Now, when I look back on IPI's journey to this parliament building, I realise the importance of those first steps in Budapest in 2005 when the IPI Executive Board agreed to come to Belgrade.

I think few of us realised at the time that this decision would take us along a path so familiar to many of my IPI colleagues. IPI has a long tradition of holding its World Congresses in countries where great change is occurring. We were in Germany at the fall of the Wall, in South Africa during the first democratic elections after apartheid in 1994, and in Russia in 1998. Now, we find ourselves in Belgrade also at a time of significant events.

Once again, the chosen themes of our World Congress over the next three days are appropriate to the venue. In a series of panels, we will discuss the media situation in the South Eastern region.

Then there is discussion of freedom of the press—the very reason for IPI's existence. As we move deeper into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the world's media grapples with the dazzling pace of change and the IPI community will discuss new media, as well as the influence of profits on the news. These are the discussions that we do best: leading the way regarding the media, while alert to the dangers to press freedom.

And IPI comes to you at a time of an important anniversary. This year is the sixtieth Anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in particular, Article 19.

IPI's Constitution states that “[IPI] defends everyone's personal freedom, the freedom of expression and, in particular, the basic right of freedom of the media, as stated in article XIX in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, (Dec. 10, 1948).” Therefore, Article 19 is implicit in the work of IPI. In effect, it is our governing statement.

Two years after this document, in 1950, IPI was founded when 34 editors from 15 countries met at Columbia University in New York. Our organisation is therefore born from the hopes and aspirations of a world whose most recent memories

were of the carnage and the horror of the Second World War. We exist, because those who gave sacrifice believed that fundamental human rights were key to the rejection of violence.

Despite your best efforts Mr President and all your hard work I believe there are still shadows from Serbia's past that reach into the present day.

*Mr President*, when I think of these shadows, I am reminded of:

- Slavko Curuvija [**Choo-roo-vi-yah**], the owner and director of the daily *Dnevni telegraf* and the magazine *Evropljanin*, shot dead on 11 April 1999.
  
- Or the murder of Milan Pantic, a correspondent in Jagodina for the Belgrade daily *Vecernje Novosti*. Pantic was found dead in front of his home on 11 June 2001.
  
- Or, Dada Vujasinovic [**vuja-sino-vic**], a freelancer and contributor to the Belgrade magazine *Duga*, whose death remains unexplained to this day.
  
- Or most recently, the case of Dejan Anastasijevic's [**anastasi-jevic**], an investigative reporter and editor for the Belgrade weekly, who faced an assassination attempt on his life in 2007.

According to my information, no individuals have been formally charged in these cases. They remain unsolved.

*Mr President:* I call upon you in fraternity and in our mutual belief in human rights and freedom of the press to encourage the authorities to solve these cases. The impunity of the past must be faced now and those who commit murder must be punished, no matter how long after the fact.

And I say that if we fail in this endeavour, if we remain silent: through our own silence, we will condemn others to silence. That these acts will confirm to the narrow minority that murder may be committed without punishment.

I do not believe that these are the values we wish to see in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

However, as my Chairman has said, I am not here to lecture you Mr. President. I raise these cases because of IPI's 57 year history of dealing with global press freedom violations around the world. Therefore, I speak not from the pulpit, but from the aisle of genuine concern for Serbia's media.

As I respect your own desire for democracy in Serbia, I hope you will respect IPI's desire for justice in these cases.

Speech: Opening Session, Belgrade, 15 June 2008

I know also that you also desire to bring about beneficial change. Both I and the assembled IPI Community wish you every success, and we join with you today in offering you our support.

Thank you Mr President.