

Sarajevo, March 14, 2007

Dear Mr. Schwarz-Schilling,

For more than a year now, the Bosnian-Herzegovinian and the international scientific community has been following the development of pseudoarchaeological trend and project of search for the alleged prehistoric pyramids near Visoko in Bosnia-Herzegovina in utter appalment. Particularly worrying are the support given to this project by a part of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian political establishment and the politicized rhetoric applied to present the alleged discovery of Visoko pyramids as fundamental state interest to the public. Therefore, your last year's visit to the location of the alleged discovery and support to its alleged researcher, Mr. Semir Osmanagic, given in the capacity of the High Commissioner and the most important representative of international community in Bosnia-Herzegovina, is unacceptable and shocking.

The local and international experts in archaeology, history and geology have, over the course of the past year, individually or jointly, expressed their criticism over this project and warned of the dangers posed by such pseudoarchaeological trend and amateurish excavations to the real cultural and historical heritage. They particularly stressed the inappropriateness of support to such pseudoscientific project in a society that has recently emerged from a horrible war and has great difficulties in restoring its high education facilities, museums, libraries and other cultural, scientific and research institutions.

In May last year, some twenty Bosnian-Herzegovinian archaeologists, historians and museologists, following many individual outcries in local media, directed a joint open letter of protest to the federal authorities which gave green light to this project without adequate scientific supervision. A group of Bosnian-Herzegovinian geologists made a report clearly overturning, on scientific basis, the hypothesis of the alleged pyramids near Visoko. Ignoring all these reports and warnings, the then member of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian joint presidency, Mr. Sulejman Tihic, asked for support to this project from the UNESCO representatives. Following that, in June last year, some thirty international experts sent a letter to the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, expressing their concern over the development of pseudoarchaeology in Bosnia-Herzegovina and seeking for the prompt expert judgement of that project. Meantime, similar criticism and concerns came from the European Association of Archaeologists as well as from the American archaeological community. Their scientifically based arguments were not accepted by any of the authorized institutions in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

A number of these experts and representatives of the highest international archaeological bodies, headed by Mr. Anthony Harding, the president of the European Association of Archaeologists, and Mr. Hermann Parzinger, the president of Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, have recently appealed to the Bosnian-Herzegovinian authorities with request that this project is critically evaluated, but that appeal received no reply. Despite all these warnings, numerous leading Bosnian-Herzegovinian politicians, including religious leaders, are increasingly supportive of this highly problematic project. In August last year, you too visited the Visoko hill of Pljesevica – renamed into the Pyramid of the Moon – and gave your support to Mr. Semir Osmanagic, the American businessman of

Bosnian origin, who presents himself as independent explorer of ancient mysteries. On that occasion, you have called Mr. Osmanagic – who claims that Bosnia is the cradle of human civilization – a visionary, while Bosnian-Herzegovinian media carried your another statement:

„I do not believe that this was created by nature and the sceptic scientists who claim so should come here, make an experiment and prove it. I congratulate you on your work so far, on opening the possibility for present generations to see ancient past and I hope that your vision will, with each day, be closer to the truth. I wish you a lot of success in the future work and do not hesitate to, in case of need, ask for my help.“

By this act, you have completely turned against the principles of institution that you represent and paved the way for further open support to this pseudoproject by the local politicians, introducing further influence of pseudoscience in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Europe. The negative effects of such support are already visible. A great part of the population is convinced that the pyramids are actually discovered despite the lack of any evidence to support this conviction even after substantial diggings on the site. The reality is, however, far off from your assertion that present generations will be able to see the ancient past of Bosnia-Herzegovina. On the contrary, in the wider Visoko region, where Mr. Semir Osmanagic and his people conduct their amateur diggings (often using bulldozers), endangered are some of the archaeological layers that are of utmost importance to research and understanding of the human continuity in this area from neolithic period (Okoliste), the very beginnings of Bosnia as an organized societal unit in the early medieval period (Biskupici, Mostre, Visoki) to development of the late medieval Bosnian Kingdom (medieval royal town of Visoki on top of the hill renamed into the Pyramid of the Sun).

In that sense, the amateur diggings and destruction of archaeological stratification is not the only problem and hazard. From the very beginning, the project showed tendency to concealment of certain discovered artefacts that did not fit the hypotheses of Mr. Semir Osmanagic, namely remains of human bones, various tools and ceramic shards, as reported by various media during the summer of 2006. All of these finds are consistent with the existing knowledge about the Visoko valley archaeology and particularly with the warnings by the local and international experts that Mr. Osmanagic's dilettantish and questionable diggings are endangering and destroying real and valuable archaeological locations and finds, most probably dating to the medieval period. His team never published any official reports about these finds nor it has informed the public on where they were sent for analyses, nor on these alleged analyses results.

Apart from concealing the unwanted evidence, lacking any other supporting arguments for their hypotheses, Mr. Osmanagic and his followers are falsifying the interpretations of the known historical monuments and traditions in order to create an illusion of an ancient mystery that needs to be solved. In such attempts, the famous Bosnian-Herzegovinian medieval tombstones *stecci* are interpreted by Mr. Osmanagic as „megaliths that have rolled down from the pyramid“ or remains of „ancient energy temples“ while early romanesque reliefs of crosses inscribed in circles – a motif well

know throughout the medieval Europe! – become „diagrams of mysterious ancient mechanisms“, etc.

Any criticism over such pseudoscientific approach in Bosnia-Herzegovina is stamped as a unpatriotic act while critics are stigmatized as traitors in public, since the pyramid project has since its beginning been identified with a „national interest“. You have contributed to this conviction in the public as well, by giving your support to Semir Osmanagic, who does not shy away from claiming that the entire future and prosperity of Bosnia-Herzegovina depend on the success of his project.

In that sense, the plans to expand the project to the wider Bosnia-Herzegovina areas in 2007 are particularly alarming. This „Foundation“ has visible aspirations to spread their activities to the wider Bosnia-Herzegovina region, as well as the neighboring Croatia. Further claims in the European context can be expected, since the final proclaimed goal of this „alternative“ undertaking is nothing less than overturning the entire world science and all of its achievements, with setting up a new system of „knowledge and values“, based on the esotericism and sectarianism of the „New Age“ type. The pseudoarchaeological search for alleged pyramids in Visoko and the support given to this project have already opened the door wide for other similar pseudoscientific tendencies in Bosnia-Herzegovina, namely the recently proclaimed renewal of the search for Homer's Troy in the Neretva river valley, according to the claims made by the Mexican businessman Salinas Price, which were, otherwise, disproved by the Bosnian-Herzegovinian archaeologists some twenty years ago.



The High Representative Christian Schwarz-Schilling and the American businessman and self-proclaimed explorer Semir Osmanagic at the Pljesevica hill, August 2006



Devastated remains of a possible medieval tomb, discovered at the foot of the Pljesevica hill, interpreted as an alleged entrance to the so-called Pyramid of the Moon, built 27.000-12.000 years ago



Petrified lake sediments from the geological period of Miocene, approximately seven million years old, presented as a part of the construction elements of the so-called Pyramid of the Moon



Layers of the Miocenic Lasva conglomerates on the west slope of the Visocica hill, wrongly interpreted as a wall construction of the oldest and the biggest pyramid in the world (so-called Pyramid of the Sun, built 27.000-12.000 years ago by a mysterious civilization)

Mr. Schwarz-Schilling, these are not visions for a better future nor of ancient past, that is multiple vandalism – destruction of the existing cultural and historical heritage as well as an attempt to overturn the civilizational achievements and systems of values, not only in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also in Europe. You, as a representative of such Europe, have a duty of helping the Bosnian-Herzegovinian scientific community and layman public to ward off the pseudoarchaeological specter of antiintellectualism in Visoko. Of you, we demand:

1. That the High Representative, in his engagement in the context of research and protection of cultural heritage of Bosnia-Herzegovina, applies the same criteria relevant in his country, the European Union and entire civilized world, and keeps in mind the relevant facts instead of giving support to adventuristic and pseudoscientific projects;
2. That the High Representative, for purposes of adequate protection of the remaining endangered monuments in the Visoko region, ensures that Mr. Osmanagic's Foundation fulfills its duty towards the state Institute to Protect Cultural Monuments by delivering all inventory books, field diaries and the complete report with photo and drawn documentation of diggings done on Visocica hill in 2005 and 2006, and on Pljesevica hill in 2006, so that the expert evaluation of that documentation is enabled. Only by doing so, a judgement can be reached on appropriateness of the conducted diggings, potential falsification of the finds eliminated and possibility of prolonging the further digging permits considered;
3. That the High Representative recognizes the opinion and arguments by the experts of the Faculty of Mining, Geology and Civil Engineering at the University of Tuzla who have on several occasions publicly opposed the abuse of geology for purposes of misleading the Bosnian-Herzegovinian public. They have clearly stated these arguments in their Report on the geological research at the Visocica hill near Visoko, accepted by the scientific and educational Council of the Faculty on April 17, 2006. The research was

done at the request by the Archaeological Park: Bosnian Pyramid of the Sun Foundation itself;

4. That the High Representative urges with adequate authorities of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the European Union and Germany as presiding the European Union, that Bosnia-Herzegovina signs the European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Valletta 1992), as well as for providing conditions to open archaeology studies in Sarajevo. That kind of study is the only guarantee that appropriate expert body will be educated, capable to apply modern scientific methods in research and protection of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian cultural heritage.

As stated at the beginning of this letter, archaeologists, historians and geologists of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Europe and America have already on several occasions warned of the danger and damage that false archaeology in Bosnia-Herzegovina causes to the cultural history of our country, Europe and the world. Our warnings so far have not been considered in any aspect, not by the OHR, nor by the local political structures directly responsible for such matters. This is our last warning attempt and this time it is not directed only to the local, but also to the European and international public. In case that this letter once again receives no appropriate reaction, you will, together with the local politicians, bear the responsibility for all consequences that further unchallenged spreading of the false science will leave on our and the world heritage, as well as on the interpersonal relations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Europe and the rest of the world.

Please note that this letter will be published in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian and international media, with possibility of gaining a petitionary character.

With respect,
in the name of historians, geologists and archaeologists of Bosnia-Herzegovina:

Dr. Dubravko Lovrenovic, professor of history at the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo

Dr. Sc. Sejfudin Vrabac, full-time professor of geology at the Faculty of Mining, Geology and Civil Engineering at the University of Tuzla; Leader of the team for geological research of the Visocica Hill near Visoko

Dr. Sc. Hazim Hrvatovic, associate professor, the Faculty of Mining, Geology and Civil Engineering at the University of Tuzla

Dr. Sc. Senaid Salihovic, associate professor, the Faculty of Mining, Geology and Civil Engineering at the University of Tuzla

Dr. Sc. Amir Barakovic, associate professor, the Faculty of Mining, Geology and Civil Engineering at the University of Tuzla

Dr. Sc. Zijad Ferhatbegovic, senior lecturer, the Faculty of Mining, Geology and Civil Engineering at the University of Tuzla

Dr. Sc. Zehra Salkic, senior lecturer, the Faculty of Mining, Geology and Civil Engineering at the University of Tuzla

M.A. Sc. Izudin Djulovic, senior assistant, the Faculty of Mining, Geology and Civil Engineering at the University of Tuzla

M.A. Sc. Elvir Babajic, senior assistant, the Faculty of Mining, Geology and Civil Engineering at the University of Tuzla

Dr. Ljiljana Sevo, professor of art history at universities of Sarajevo and Banja Luka

Dr. Blagoje Govedarica, professor of prehistoric archaeology at the Heidelberg University; Scientific advisor at the Centre for Balkan Studies of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Academy of Sciences and Arts in Sarajevo

Academician Dzevad Juzbasic, member of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Academy of Sciences and Arts, acting director of the Academy's Centre for Balkan Studies

Prof. Dr. Enver Imamovic, full-time professor of ancient history and archaeology at the History Department of the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo

Dr. Salmedin Mesihovic, senior lecturer at the History Department of the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo

M.A. Adnan Busuladzic, head of the Department of Archaeology at the National Museum of Bosnia-Herzegovina in Sarajevo

Zilka Kujundzic-Vejzagic, advisor curator at the National Museum of Bosnia-Herzegovina in Sarajevo

M.A. Mirsad Sijaric, research associate, curator for the Late Middle Age at the National Museum of Bosnia-Herzegovina in Sarajevo

M.A. Lidija Fekeza, research associate, archaeologist for the Early Middle Age at the National Museum of Bosnia-Herzegovina in Sarajevo

Andrijana Providur, curator at the National Museum of Bosnia-Herzegovina in Sarajevo

Mirsad Avdic, senior curator at the Museum of Sarajevo

Melisa Foric, research assistant at the Centre for Balkan Studies of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Academy of Sciences and Arts in Sarajevo