Ladies and gentleman, dear colleagues, dear friends, dear guests

Each and every year **on this very day - 18 of November -** Croatia - with undiminished pain 27 years after the end of the armed conflict on its territory – **remembers all its victims:** **those** killed, **those** wounded, **those** maimed, **those** missing, **those** permanently devastated - civilians and former combatants **alike**.

**Two places** - **Vukovar** - in the very east of our country, and **Škabrnja** - in its south - due to the gravity of the crimes committed against their inhabitants and defenders - symbolically embody the suffering of the Croatian people endured during the Homeland War and thereafter.

Among **many crimes** committed during the aggression against the Republic of Croatia - **the murder of about 300 wounded persons taken from the Vukovar hospital and killed on nearby Ovčara on 20th and 21st of November 1991 - stands out** for its absolute cruelty and total incomprehensibility. **The massacre** of more than sixty inhabitants of Škabrnja, shot dead at point blank range, only a few days earlier - on 18th of November 1991 - was a **terrifying introduction** to the tragedy that befell Vukovar after its fall.

Ladies and gentleman, dear friends,

Croatia today **mourns, sympathizes, prays, light candles** … remains silent - remembering.

**Unfortunately, my country** **has learned all too well** the horrors of war and its consequences - **the price of which** she paid with the limbs, lives and agony of all its citizens. That is exactly **why** Croatia today - while yet another brutal aggression is taking place - **so easily** recognizes the **suffering of others and shares** their pain like its own.

Madames et messieurs, chere amis,

Je vous remercier d'etre venus ce soir pour donneé hommage à toutes les victimes du guerre en Croatie. Merci! Je donne maintenant la parole à MMe Palić pour quelques mot d'introduction sur le programme de ce soiree.