



Message by the President of the Swiss Confederation Simonetta Sommaruga on the occasion of the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust, Tuesday 27 January 2015

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### **‘Auschwitz – never again’**

‘*Auschwitz – never again*’ is a profound sentiment that we have carried with us for many decades. Some of those who were forced to endure the hell of the largest concentration camp are still among us. One Swiss survivor has also made the journey to Auschwitz today, where we, together with the rest of the world, will commemorate the liberation of the camp exactly 70 years ago to the day and remember the countless victims of a despicable and inhuman policy.

Gábor Hirsch was still a child when he was deported from Hungary with his family. It is something that should never have happened. But it did happen, not that long ago, in the heart of Europe. After the war, he and other survivors who found a new home in Switzerland came together to set up the *Contact Point for Holocaust Survivors in Switzerland*. With the support of the federal government, the *Contact Point* released a series of previously unpublished eyewitness accounts. I received the last three memoirs and the final volume from the publishers today. I was deeply moved by my meeting with the survivors, and I am grateful for the opportunity to read these personal chronicles.

Seventy years have passed since the camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau was liberated and the Second World War came to a close. Is it fair to say that, after the agonising years of antagonism, we have now enjoyed seventy years of coexistence? Yes and no; violence, sovereignty claims and hate still pose a threat to our values of coexistence – to stability and peace.

At the end of the 1990s, a process was set in motion that led to the establishment of International Holocaust Remembrance Day on the 27th of January. The *International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance*, which Switzerland has belonged to since 2004, was set up in 1998. Switzerland pledges its unreserved commitment to the *Stockholm Declaration*, adopted at an international conference in 2000. We speak out against racism and anti-Semitism, against social exclusion and xenophobia, against violence and terror.

Coexistence instead of antagonism – each day anew we have the responsibility of making sure we live alongside one another in mutual respect.