



International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

OSCE Permanent Council

22 January, Vienna

- As the Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, it is an honour to be able to address you all today, almost 70 years since the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau by Soviet forces. That day, 27 January, in 1945 is now remembered around the world as International Holocaust Remembrance Day.
- For the British it was the liberation of Bergen Belsen by British forces in April that year which had such a profound effect on us. And there were so many other camps - concentration, forced labour and extermination – across Europe where the revelations about what had taken place shook our societies to the core.
- Here in Austria we think particularly of Mauthausen. But it is true too of Dachau, Terezin, Buchenwald, Neuengamme, as well of the other Nazi extermination camps in Poland, Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek. And of course there were many hundreds of other camps too, including those in the Balkans, not least Jasenovac.
- It is a particular pleasure to be invited to address you by Ambassador Zugic of the Republic of Serbia, Chairman of the Permanent Council of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Serbia became a full member of the IHRA in 2011, since when the number of Balkan members has continued to grow.
- The OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights has been a valued International Partner of IHRA since 2004 when they first introduced their portfolio on combatting antisemitism and we have cooperated with ODHIR on various projects, gratefully valuing their insights and wisdom.

- The ODHIR is also one of the organisations with which IHRA has a Memorandum of Understanding, designed to ensure close cooperation and facilitate the sharing information. A publication on “Education on the Holocaust and Antisemitism” was also released in cooperation with IHRA in 2006.
- Here I must highlight that ODHIR and IHRA visited Moldova together in January 2014 within the framework of our Multi Year Program on Holocaust Memorial Days and were involved in a roundtable organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Following further outreach, in December of last year IHRA was very pleased to welcome Moldova as an observer country; a development which would not have been possible without the groundwork laid in cooperation with ODHIR.
- I was particularly keen to accept this invitation because I was the Conference Secretary in the UK Delegation 40 years ago which spent nearly three years negotiating the Helsinki Final Act, signed in the summer of 1975. For me this was a formative period in my own career as well of course as a major watershed in European history. The principles enshrined in the Final Act and the practical commitments agreed under the various basket headings were the product of very tough and protracted negotiations. But they marked a step-change in European relationships which have profoundly benefited all the OSCE’s member states since then.
- 2015 is a year of many other important anniversaries; especially that of the Stockholm Declaration about which I shall speak in a moment.
- But it is also a year which has begun with shockingly abhorrent acts in Paris by fanatics who have demonstrated their intolerance of the views of others and of the principles of European life, enshrined among other places in the founding documents of the OSCE; and who have shown us all how virulently alive the virus of antisemitism still is.
- Coming with other violent events in Belgium, Australia and France, and a rising tide of hate crimes and incidents of hate speech across Europe, including sadly in the UK, the task of governments now is to strengthen the security of our populations, without giving way to xenophobia or compromising on the core values of European civilization.

- In this context I strongly welcome the admirably forthright Declaration on the Terrorist Attacks in Paris made by the 57 members of the OSCE last week. Your condemnation of terrorism and intolerance and your call for non-discrimination, tolerance, mutual respect and freedom of expression must be heard around the world.
- 15 years ago, in January 2000, the representatives of 46 governments came together in Stockholm at the International Forum on the Holocaust to commit themselves, in another succinct and bluntly honest Declaration, to further international cooperation on Holocaust education, remembrance and research.
- This Declaration is the founding document of IHRA; an inter-governmental body of 31 full members which functions as a political network of policy-makers, survivors, academics, educators, curators and experts. Our membership is growing and we now have eight observer states which we hope will in due time advance to full membership, as well as seven International Partner institutions.
- The Stockholm Declaration states that “We must strengthen the moral commitment of our peoples, and the political commitment of our governments, to ensure that future generations can understand the causes of the Holocaust and reflect upon its consequences.”
- The Declaration goes on to say that “Our commitment must be to remember the victims who perished, respect the survivors who are still with us, and reaffirm humanity’s common aspiration for mutual understanding and justice.”
- Today we are here to remember that racism, antisemitism and xenophobia can and do lead to ethnic cleansing, genocide and other mass atrocities.
- By remembering, we honour the victims of the Holocaust and their families but also the survivors, and those who stood up against the prejudice and violence of the Holocaust Era.
- It is noticeable that, as we move further away in time from the Holocaust and from the Second World War, more and more countries are choosing to hold memorial events on a governmental level to mark painful events in their national calendars and in world history.

- We must ask ourselves why moving further away from events leads us to turn more towards the past?
- I believe this is because remembering is not only about looking backwards.
- The importance of Holocaust Remembrance Days is linked to our realisation that there is much work still to do and many lessons still to be learned; to the realisation that prejudice, antisemitism and xenophobia still exist and that genocide is not a historical blight but a current threat and an all too frequent occurrence.
- Holocaust remembrance, whether through memorial days or museums or educational programmes, constitutes a vital “fire-break” between past history and future behaviour. The Holocaust has global importance.
- IHRA seeks to ensure that not only is the Holocaust never forgotten, but that we draw insights from our study of the past to inform what we do in the future; working towards mutual respect, to a deeper and more sympathetic understanding of our differences and so to more just societies.
- We remember not only to honour the victims of a tragedy which challenged the foundations of civilization. We remember in response to those that pretend this tragedy never took place, in response to the Holocaust deniers and denigrators, in response to those who seek to minimize what happened or blur the responsibilities, in response to those who trivialize the Holocaust or who invoke Holocaust comparisons in wholly inappropriate ways to attack their political opponents;
- We remember above all with a determination that the Holocaust should never happen again and in the hope that the lessons of the past may positively influence the world we live in today and the generations yet to come.
- Even on this day of remembrance, we cannot truly separate the three founding tenets of the Stockholm Declaration; research, remembrance and education.

- To research is to remember;
- By exploring the lesser known aspects of the Holocaust, by identifying individuals and previously unknown victim groups, we remember those who are in danger of being forgotten or amalgamated into the larger historical narrative.
- Some speak these days of the right to be forgotten. But we must never forget. Many thousands of people around the world struggle to ensure that we retrieve the memory of those who died in the killing sites as well as the extermination camps scattered across Europe and that we realise what a huge loss to European civilization was the destruction of Jewish and Roma communities wrought by National Socialism.
- In this context may I draw your attention to the International Tracing Service at Bad Arolsen in Germany, now inscribed on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register. The ITS preserves the records of nearly 18 million victims of Nazism and displaced persons who transited the camps eventually liberated by the Western allies.
- Long administered by the ICRC, the ITS archive is now being opened up by the International Commission which runs it and by its new Director, to public access. It will become a leading international centre in Europe for education and research on Nazi persecution, the Holocaust, forced labour and displaced persons.
- To teach is also to remember;
- By educating the generations to come, we ensure that the Holocaust, and its victims, do not fade into the past but remain an ever present reminder of what can happen when societies allow their political life to be coarsened by racial and religious hatred.
- Holocaust research, remembrance and education are inextricably linked.
- Our obligation to the victims of the Holocaust extends beyond remembering. It extends to actively cooperating and acting to prevent.
- It extends to affecting real change on a political level.
- The UN-mandated 27 January International Holocaust Remembrance Day was a milestone because it placed Holocaust Remembrance clearly

within the remit of states; some of whom had been commemorating the Holocaust for many, many years and some who had not.

- This official day of remembrance made it clear that it is not the duty of the individually affected communities alone to commemorate the Holocaust; it is a duty of all mankind and thus, the duty of all governments.
- During the IHRA Plenary meetings in the United Kingdom in December last year, Charlotte Cohen regional ambassador for the Holocaust Educational Trust and member of the British Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission, underlined that: "Holocaust Remembrance cannot be consigned to one single day." Nor indeed to one single national ceremony.
- In the UK the government-supported Holocaust Memorial Day Trust stimulates and encourages over 2000 events across the country each January, working with the Anne Frank Trust and other groups in schools, prisons, civic venues etc. And the Holocaust Educational Trust arranges study visits to Auschwitz-Birkenau by thousands of young people
- So this is the message that we should all take away with us.
- January 27 is a fundamental and important event. It is our duty to remember and it is right that we come together to show our respect to the victims and survivors, but when we return home to our offices and ministries we must continue to show our respect by working to open archives, develop educational programmes, support academics, curators and educators and encourage commemorative events.
- It is with this ongoing commitment in mind that IHRA member countries are reaffirming the Stockholm Declaration on 27 January this year by saying, in a statement agreed last month at our plenary meeting in Manchester:
- **Today, 70 years after the liberation of Auschwitz, the 31 member and eight observer countries of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), together with our seven Permanent International Partners, have collectively reaffirmed our strong and**

unqualified support for the founding document of our organisation, the Stockholm Declaration of the year 2000, and the solemn commitments which our governments then undertook.

The unprecedented character of the Holocaust will always hold universal meaning for us. We are committed to remembering and honouring its victims, to upholding the terrible truth of the Holocaust, to standing up against those who distort or deny it and to combatting antisemitism, racism and prejudice against the Roma and Sinti.

We are determined to continue to develop our international cooperation on Holocaust education, remembrance and research and the prevention of future genocides.

- This reaffirmation is a reminder, to the world and to ourselves, of what we have promised to do. It is a reminder too that we are united in this task.