

**SPEAKING NOTES**

**DR. MARIO SILVA**

**CLOSING RECEPTION**

**OSCE-ODIHR SECURITY OF JEWISH  
COMMUNITIES CONFERENCE**

**JUNE 13, 2013**

**17h30 – 19h00**

**BERLIN CONGRESS CENTRE**

Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening. I trust that you all had successful meetings on an important issue – the safety and security of Jewish communities.

I'd like to thank Ambassador Lenarcic for extending the invitation to me. I very much look forward to hearing about some of the outcomes of this conference.

As Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, or IHRA, it's an honour to be here. We too just concluded a very successful round of meetings this week with experts and Heads of Delegation from our 31 member states on a range of issues with respect to Holocaust education, remembrance, and research.

To me, there are obvious links between your work and that of IHRA.

As you know, the Holocaust was the most extreme manifestation of antisemitism the world has ever seen.

It rested firmly on the foundations of religious prejudice and a century of antisemitic speech, violence, vandalism, and failure of effective government action.

Without looking too hard, we can see some of these dangers gaining ground today, whether directed against Jews or against the Jewish state.

As we are all aware, antisemitism is present in across all strata of society and takes many different forms.

It is primarily – but certainly not exclusively – espoused by various extremist groups at all ends of the political spectrum, including far right groups, far left groups, and radical religious groups.

These groups utilize diminishment of the Holocaust, Holocaust denial, and the technique of blaming the Jews for the Holocaust in their antisemitic rhetoric.

Holocaust denial, or blaming Jews for exaggerating, creating, or misusing the Shoah for political or financial gain, is simply one of the many forms of both classical and current antisemitism.

“Traditional” antisemitic myths and images, such as the belief in a “world conspiracy” through which Jews gain power and advantages through business, finance, and the media, continue to widely persist.

No country is immune to antisemitic manifestations. We are dealing with a widespread, serious and ongoing problem.

As you’ve discussed here today, verbal assaults and violent attacks motivated by antisemitism have become a serious issue for public officials, law enforcement, civil society and Jewish communities all across the OSCE region.

That's why IHRA member states are committed to use Holocaust remembrance in the international fight against antisemitism, hatred, intolerance, and discrimination.

IHRA's member states are governed by the principles of the *Stockholm Declaration*, which emphasizes the importance of upholding the "terrible truth of the Holocaust against those who deny it," and of preserving the memory of the Holocaust.

The memory is what we owe to the victims, survivors, and to ourselves – so that "Never Again" is not just a hollow slogan, but a promise to the victims that has been fulfilled.

There is still a tendency, however, to consider the Holocaust a topic that deals exclusively with the past.

I challenge this view – I believe that the future of combating antisemitism lies in increased, effective, and widespread efforts to promote Holocaust remembrance.

It is vital that we learn from the Holocaust and are empowered to shape an inclusive society, based on respect for diversity and the protection and promotion of fundamental human rights.

Nor is Holocaust remembrance only the responsibility of the Jewish community.

That's why the United Nations acknowledged in its resolution creating International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January that this work of memory and responsibility belongs to the international community, governments, and to all humankind.

Furthermore, in recognition of common goals, I'm pleased that the IHRA and OSCE/ODIHR signed a Memorandum of Understanding to develop and ensure close co-operation.

In this spirit, I encourage all OSCE participating States not yet affiliated with the IHRA to consider joining.

Ladies and gentlemen, in honour of the memory of the victims of the Holocaust, let us each renew today our commitment to fight antisemitism, racism and all ideologies that exclude groups of people and spread hatred.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak to you today.