



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Conference on Combating Anti-Semitism in the OSCE Region

Bratislava, 5-6 February 2019

Opening Remarks

H.E. Ambassador Thomas Greminger, OSCE Secretary General

Minister Lajčák,

Thank you for convening this important event on how states, institutions and individuals can help to address anti-Semitism, which remains a serious and persistent challenge in many of our societies. I am honoured to be here.

Dear Ministers,

Dear Representatives of the Jewish Community,

Colleagues and Friends,

On 27 January, International Holocaust Remembrance Day commemorated the liberation of the Auschwitz/Birkenau death camps in 1945. The horror of the Holocaust provides the strongest example of the evil that humans are capable of doing to others.

The awareness of genocide and crimes against humanity that emerged after the Holocaust has had significant impact on international security mechanisms, including in the OSCE. These atrocities were a catalyst for the development of a new postwar world order. They opened a new path for international co-operation aimed at creating a more respectful and responsible global community.

After the war, governments across the globe agreed that international law and an agreed set of global rules for co-operation were the only viable basis for promoting and preserving a peaceful world. By adopting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the international community vowed that the atrocities of the Holocaust must never happen again.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights also inspired the comprehensive concept of security that underpins the OSCE and all that we do. The 1975 Helsinki Final Act inscribed respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as one of ten guiding principles, setting the human dimension on a par with the politico-military and the economic and environmental dimensions of security. The Helsinki Final Act also recognized the interdependency of the three dimensions of security. In other words, political or economic security cannot be achieved without fostering human rights and democracy.

OSCE participating States have repeatedly acknowledged that the inherent dignity of the individual is at the core of comprehensive security. The Organization's tolerance and non-discrimination agenda, including efforts to combat anti-Semitism, forms a crucial and integral part of this heritage from Helsinki.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In recent years, the postwar international security order and the commitments in which it is grounded have come under threat. Today our security environment is more polarized, more unpredictable, and more unstable than it has been in decades. Anti-Semitism, together with racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance, threatens the security of communities and of individuals.

Anti-Semitism damages the fabric of democratic societies, threatening stability and security in many parts of the OSCE region. So tackling anti-Semitism requires a comprehensive approach – including enhancing the security of Jewish communities, investing in educational initiatives to prevent anti-Semitism, and addressing all forms of intolerance and discrimination in our societies.

The three Personal Representatives of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on issues of tolerance and non-discrimination play a crucial role in raising awareness of threats to the safety and wellbeing of religious communities throughout the OSCE region. The efforts of Rabbi Andrew Baker, as Personal Representative on Combatting Anti-Semitism, deserve strong recognition. His colleagues, Ambassador Mehmet Paçacı and Professor Ingeborg Gabriel, also contribute to more tolerant and secure societies in the OSCE region.

As you have just heard from Ingibjörg Gísladóttir, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights – ODIHR – is the OSCE's hub of expertise on matters of tolerance and non-discrimination, including anti-Semitism.

Anti-Semitism has been explicitly condemned in a number of OSCE documents dating back to 1990. This includes the 2004 Berlin Declaration, reinforced 10 years later by the Basel Declaration, in which participating States expressed concern about the rise in anti-Semitic incidents and the challenge they present to stability and security in the OSCE region. Our ministers declared unambiguously that security developments, including in the Middle East, cannot justify anti-Semitism. They also called for strengthening efforts to combat anti-Jewish hatred through education, Holocaust remembrance, and monitoring, reporting and investigating hate crimes.

Conferences like today's play an important role in raising awareness of the persistent challenges that anti-Semitism, intolerance and discrimination continue to pose for our societies. I hope that some compelling ideas on how to address anti-Semitism more effectively, and how to turn our international and OSCE commitments into concrete action, will emerge from today's discussions. The pS must demonstrate political will to fulfill these commitments. And they must ensure that national measures to combat discrimination are adequately enforced.

I look forward to hearing how governments and local communities throughout the OSCE region can reach out – through education and other measures – to civil society, and in

particular to young people, to promote tolerance and non-discrimination. Let me end by emphasizing once more that strengthening the security in our societies through addressing intolerance with a comprehensive and co-operative approach remains the best way to prevent anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination.

Thank you.