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STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1266th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

7 May 2020

On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War

Mr. Chairperson,

The European Union thanks Ambassador Michaela Küchler for her statement delivered on behalf of the German Chairmanship of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). Had the circumstances been different, the Permanent Council today would have been able to travel to Mauthausen. At the entrance of the camp we would have been greeted by these verses by Louis Aragon: “The dead do not sleep, / They have but this stone / Powerless to carry the mass of their names. / The memory of the crime is the only prayer, / Passer-by, that we ask of you.”¹ We thank the IHRA for its essential work to ensure that the Holocaust – the most heinous crime in European history – is never forgotten. We also convey our thanks in advance to Ambassador Wolfgang Paul, the Mauthausen Memorial’s special representative for international contacts, for the presentation that will follow.

On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe, we pay a most heartfelt tribute to all the victims and also to the historical role of the Allied forces and the sacrifices they made to overcome Nazism during the war. We should also remember that the Second World War gave rise to painful divisions within Europe. For many European countries, the end of the war did not bring freedom but, instead, oppression and new crimes against humanity directed against their population.

The most tragic chapter of the Second World War is the Shoah. Remembrance of the Shoah is one of the foundations of European values, underpinning a Europe that puts at its heart humanity, protected by the rule of law, by democracy and by fundamental rights.

We recall that the Nazi regime and its allies, its fascist and nationalist partners, along with the other collaborators who participated in these crimes, tried to systematically exterminate the Jewish people and other groups on the grounds of their ethnic origin, beliefs or sexual orientation.

We have a duty of memory, both individually and collectively – especially at a time when anti-Semitism is reviving, anti-Semitic conspiracy theories are again on the rise, and attacks against Jews and the memory of the Holocaust are occurring with alarming frequency both in Europe and beyond. The EU will always continue to oppose all forms of anti-Semitism, including attempts to deny or trivialize the Holocaust. More than ever before, it behoves us to remain vigilant, to respond to and take action against all forms of racism and discrimination, whether old or new.

¹ English translation taken from: Robert Graziani-Levy, *Lands of Memory: Wanderings and Wonderments of a Sephardic Jew* (Culver City, CA, 1991), p. 141.

The EU Member States are all united in proclaiming that anti-Semitism, racism and hatred have no place in Europe, and that we will do all that is within our power to combat them. We take this opportunity to remind you that the non-legally binding working definition of anti-Semitism adopted by the IHRA in Bucharest in 2016 is a useful tool for combating anti-Semitism.

Honest and thorough examination of the history of the Second World War contributes to reconciliation. In view of our responsibility towards all victims, past and present, we reject all attempts to falsify history and likewise all conflictive and selective approaches. In that respect and also in the spirit of the IHRA Ministerial Declaration adopted on 19 January 2020, we underline the importance of “preserving and making available archival material, testimonies and authentic sites for educational purposes, commemoration and research”.

The Second World War taught us that we needed to adopt new approaches in international relations, a new multilateralism in which the willingness to co-operate prevails over the will to dominate and in which the well-being of each State cannot be considered separately from that of its partners – based on the solid foundations provided by the shared values of freedom, human rights, democracy and the rule of law, of which the United Nations and also the EU and the OSCE are important examples. In our globalized world, particularly during the current crisis, these shared fundamental values are more relevant than ever for our peoples and for all those who wish to work together to strengthen multilateralism based on rules, peace and security, sustainable development, free and fair trade, human rights and democracy.

As we honour the memory of the victims of the Second World War, we conclude by lamenting the fact that the principles of the UN and the OSCE are not always respected, and that peace has not always become a reality across the whole of Europe.

The candidate countries North Macedonia², Montenegro², Serbia² and Albania², the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Liechtenstein, as well as Ukraine, Georgia, Andorra, San Marino and Canada, align themselves with this statement.

2 North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.