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PC.DEL/104/20/Rev.1
7 February 2020

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1257th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

30 January 2020

On the commemoration of International Holocaust Remembrance Day

The European Union thanks Ambassador Georges Santer for his address on behalf of the Luxembourg Chairmanship of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).

To those who were unaware of the existence of Auschwitz, “the daily massacre”, Primo Levi wrote in *The Reawakening* that “they ought, as a sacred duty, to listen, to learn everything, immediately, from us, from me; I felt the tattooed number on my arm burning like a sore”. On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and International Holocaust Remembrance Day, we thank the IHRA for its vital work to ensure that the truth about the Holocaust is never forgotten. We remember that the Nazi regime and its allies, its fascist and nationalist partners, as well as other collaborators who participated in these crimes, attempted to systematically exterminate the Jewish people and other groups on the basis of their ethnic origin, beliefs or sexual orientation.

The EU joins all those who, at the Yad Vashem memorial, in Auschwitz, in the presence of survivors and around the world, commemorated the most heinous crime in European history. As the Presidents of the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament underlined in Jerusalem on 23 January, the EU also joins those who are determined to stand up to extremists and populists when they try to once again call into question human dignity and equality among all human beings.

Indeed, this day of remembrance is also a day where action is taken in the present. We have a duty to remember, individually and collectively, especially at a time when anti-Semitism is regaining strength, when anti-Semitic conspiracy theories are making a comeback and when attacks on Jews and the memory of the Holocaust are occurring with alarming frequency – both in Europe and beyond. The rise of anti-Semitism threatens the values we hold dear, including pluralism and freedom of religion, belief and expression. We therefore have a duty more than ever to remain vigilant, to react and act against all forms of racism and discrimination, old and new.

The EU continues to speak out again and again against all forms of anti-Semitism, including attempts to legitimize, justify or trivialize the Holocaust. The European integration project was developed in the name of peace and democracy and is based on freedom, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, which shows how important the conscious memory of the Second World War and the Shoah is for the European Union. We have understood that our continent draws its strength from its diversity and the preservation of this diversity has become a fundamental objective of our Union. Anti-Semitism – like all forms of racism, hate, xenophobia and intolerance – is an attack on the very foundations of our societies: it is an attack on all of us. You can count on our determination to continue our work on this basis within the

OSCE. In this regard, we welcome the organization by the Albanian Chairmanship of the conference on combating anti-Semitism in the OSCE area, to be held in Tirana next week.

Over the years, the OSCE has developed a significant body of commitments to combat anti-Semitism. They form part of the broader framework of OSCE commitments in the fight against all forms of intolerance and discrimination, for the promotion of the rule of law and universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in the fight against anti-Semitism, intolerance and hate crimes, whatever the reasons behind them, is a valuable tool available to participating States. We should like to take this opportunity to commend the ODIHR on the work that has been carried out under its “Words into Action to Address Anti-Semitism” programme, particularly on education. At a time when the number of Holocaust survivors is declining, when, in the words of Simone Veil, “the era of witnesses is coming to an end”, we cannot leave our society in the grip of collective amnesia. It is our duty to tirelessly educate the younger generations, because revisionism and lack of education jeopardize the common understanding of the uniqueness of the Shoah, which is indispensable for translating the words “never again” into concrete action. Knowledge of history never encourages rivalry among the victims; on the contrary, it builds solidarity among them, beyond their differences, and strengthens the determination to defend the universal principles of human rights as guaranteed by international instruments.

As a Permanent International Partner of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, we welcome the ministerial declaration adopted at the meeting held in Brussels on 19 January, 20 years after the adoption of the Stockholm Declaration, its founding document. We share the concerns expressed with regard to the new challenges facing the IHRA, including the rise of anti-Semitism and hate speech, notably through social media, the instrumentalization of memory and the limitations of educational programmes. We also welcome the emphasis placed on the genocide of the Roma populations, which is still very little remembered today.

All EU Member States are united in proclaiming that racism, anti-Semitism and hate, in whatever form, have no place in Europe and that we will do everything in our power to combat them. We take this opportunity to recall that the non-legally binding working definition of anti-Semitism adopted by the IHRA in Bucharest in 2016 is a useful tool in the fight against anti-Semitism.

Finally, allow me to assure you, as well as the German Chairmanship of the IHRA, which will start in March, and the incoming Greek Chairmanship, of the EU’s steadfast support to ensure that the Holocaust and its victims are never forgotten.

The candidate countries North Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, Serbia¹ and Albania¹, 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, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

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