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TO THE OSCE

Statement in response
to address by the Secretary General of the IHRA on the occasion
of the commemoration of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day

Delivered by Ambassador Anne- Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 27 January 2022

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Mr. Chair,

I thank the Secretary General of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Dr. Mayer, for her statement. Norway has been a member of the alliance since 2003.

Mr. Chair,

In 1940, there were about 2,100 Jews living in Norway. The Holocaust hit the Jewish minority hard. 773 Jews were deported from Norway. Only 35 of those survived. The Norwegian Jewish minority population today consists of around 1,500 people. This community is a resource in in the development of Norwegian society. It is important for my government to emphasize that it is the responsibility of society at large to combat antisemitism. Norway is committed to remembering the lessons from Holocaust – and to do our utmost to make sure that such horrors are never allowed to reoccur.

Today, Norway is a diverse society, and the government aims to protect this diversity. Hostile attitudes towards certain groups represents a threat to society and democracy. Both distant and recent history shows that antisemitism has indeed existed in Norway. Terrorist attacks in Norway in 2011 and 2019 clearly demonstrated the link between antisemitism and right-wing extremism.

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Dear colleagues,

Every five years the Norwegian Centre for Holocaust and Minority Studies presents a survey on the attitudes of Norwegians towards Jews and other minorities. It shows that marked prejudice against Jews decreased from twelve per cent of the population in 2012, to eight per cent in 2017. This year, we will see how this develops.

The OSCE has many tools for addressing tolerance and non-discrimination. The responsibility however lies with us, the participating States. The Norwegian Action Plan Against Antisemitism focuses on seven areas of work.

First; Efforts to combat and teach about antisemitism in schools. Young Jews are supported to disseminate knowledge about what it is like to grow up as a member of a minority population in Norway, and grants are given to school classes visiting extermination camps.

Second; Work to highlight the breadth of Jewish culture. Knowledge breaks down prejudices.

Third; Hate crimes must be addressed in a broad manner. The Norwegian police database on hate crimes introduced antisemitism as a specific bias in April 2018. Since then, between 15 and 20 antisemitic hate crimes have been reported annually.

Fourth; Monitoring of the development of antisemitism through population surveys every five years. As mentioned, a new survey will be conducted this year.

Fifth; Enhancing knowledge through research about current expressions of antisemitism, the relationship between antisemitic attitudes and actions, and the Jewish experience of present-day Norway.

Sixth; Security measures are implemented through collaborative procedures between police and the Jewish communities. When Jewish sites elsewhere in Europe are targeted by terrorism and violence, the threat to Jewish institutions in Norway increases.

And seventh; Freedom of religion and belief, and the promotion of faith and religious minority rights, are high on the government's foreign policy agenda.

To conclude, I would like to express our support to the work of the IHRA, and hope for it to be successful.

Thank you.