

## **Speech for the Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, Dr. Claus Neukirch**

### **Holocaust Remembrance Round Table**

**held ONLINE, 26 January 2021**

We have gathered today to reflect upon the tragedy of the Holocaust, which affected many territories, including that of today's Republic of Moldova. However, most importantly, we have gathered today to remember the innocent victims of those tragic events and to remind ourselves that such atrocities must never happen again. The very fact that millions of innocent women, men and children were tortured and killed simply because of who they were is horrifying.

There are numerous historic documents, studies, documentaries and witness' stories that describe the Holocaust, and I encourage all of us to use these resources in our attempts to understand better what happened and how it was possible. However, apart from our individual reflections, Governments have a very important role in promoting Holocaust remembrance and education. I commend the Moldovan authorities on their continuous efforts in this field. The first comprehensive policy document on Holocaust remembrance was the Action Plan for 2017-2019. This contained a set of concrete measures in the fields of education, remembrance, research and normative framework. It is especially commendable that these efforts are continuous and, on 22 December last year, the Moldovan Government adopted a follow-up Action Plan for the years 2021-2024 [on Promoting the Holocaust Remembrance and the Culture of Tolerance for Purposes of Combating Racism, anti-Semitism, Xenophobia and Other Forms of Intolerance]. I am glad to say that the OSCE Mission to Moldova has assisted the Moldovan authorities in the implementation of the country's first Action Plan and will continue providing its assistance to implement the new one.

In this context, it is also important to work with youth. Better understanding of history, including the Holocaust, will promote the culture of tolerance and inclusivity among the young generation in Moldova. Therefore, with the support of the Mission the curriculum for the optional school course "The Holocaust: History and Lessons of Life" has been made available to pupils of 9 and 12 grades throughout Moldova since September 2019. Since then, teachers have been provided with a methodological guide to teach that course. In the past two years, the Mission has also assisted the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research in training over 200 history teachers on how to teach this course. Moreover, last year we provided technical assistance to the Ministry for the evaluation of how the topic of the Holocaust is reflected in the school history textbooks. We will continue our co-operation with the Ministry this year on improving the textbooks and building the capacity of school teachers.

However, it is very worrying to observe that anti-Semitic manifestations still happen in the Moldovan society. I was very saddened by the news about the desecration of graves in the Jewish cemetery in Chisinau in the beginning of November last year. Shortly after that unfortunate incident, the Moldovan parliament harshened the punishments for desecration of graves. Needless to say, the proper reaction of the state is crucial not only to prosecute the

perpetrators, but also to send a general signal that such behaviours will not be tolerated. I am also glad that, over the past several years, OSCE/ODIHR and the OSCE Mission to Moldova have provided technical support to Moldovan authorities in their efforts to align national hate crime legislation to international standards. I hope that the Moldovan parliament will adopt the respective legislative amendments in the final reading, soon, in order to make the fight with hate crime more effective.

However, in order to produce the desired results, normative framework must always be accompanied by proper skills and knowledge of the professionals who apply it in practice. That is why the Mission has assisted the Moldovan authorities in raising the capacities of the police and lawyers to effectively address hate crimes.

Although some impressive progress has been achieved in the past several years, there are still certain areas where efforts can be intensified, for example, in establishing a Museum of Jewish History in Chisinau. I encourage the Moldovan authorities to follow through on this commitment in close co-operation with the Jewish Community of Moldova.

The participating States of the OSCE have committed on a number of occasions to combat anti-Semitism, in particular through education and media. This Organization-wide position is an important aspect to dialogue and work across all its branches. This component is essential for security and vibrant societies that embrace and cherish all its members.

Thus, I would like to conclude by stressing the importance of advancing policies, which promote an inclusive civic identity and a cohesive and tolerant society that is safe for everyone. This will make Moldova's diversity a tangible strength and also create a sense of common home for all the people of Moldova.