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PC.DEL/127/21  
1 February 2021

ENGLISH  
Original: FRENCH

## **STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1300th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

Vienna, 28 January 2021

### **On International Holocaust Remembrance Day**

The European Union sincerely thanks Ambassador Michaela Küchler for her address on behalf of the German Chairmanship of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).

Simone Weil wrote in *A Life*: “Nothing is erased, not the transports, not the work or imprisonment, not the huts, the disease, the cold and lack of sleep, the hunger and humiliations, nor the abasement, the blows and shouting ... no nothing can and nothing should be.” On the occasion of the 76th 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 systematically to exterminate the Jewish people and other groups on the basis of their ethnic origins, beliefs or sexual orientation.

The European Union joins all those throughout the world, online or offline, who yesterday commemorated a crime without precedent in the history of humanity. At a time when the COVID-19 pandemic makes it more difficult for this essential work of remembrance to be carried out, we welcome the efforts by civil society organizations, educational institutions and museums to adapt to these new circumstances and invent new ways of communicating history.

It is a day of remembrance but it is also a day for action in the present. We have a duty to remember, individually and collectively, especially at a time when anti-Semitism is regaining strength, when conspiracy theories abound, not least in the context of the current pandemic, and when attacks on Jews and the memory of the Holocaust are occurring with alarming frequency both in Europe and beyond. Anti-Semitic acts run counter to our values, including freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression. More than ever, we therefore have a duty to remain vigilant, to react and act against all forms of racism and discrimination. This fight should also take the form of increased mobilization against hate speech, including online, and of opposing the manipulation of information.

The European Union has always spoken out 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. This 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, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance, is an attack on the very foundations of our

societies; it is an attack on each one of us. You can count on our determination to continue our work on this basis within the OSCE.

In that regard, we welcome the organization by the Swedish Chairmanship of an online expert meeting next week on countering anti-Semitism in the OSCE area and the announcement by the Swedish Government of the holding of the Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism in October.

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 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 pay tribute to the work that has been carried out under its “Words into Action to Address Anti-Semitism” programme, in particular in the field of education.

As a Permanent International Partner of the IHRA, we welcome the ministerial declaration adopted at the meeting on 19 January 2020 in Brussels, 20 years after the adoption of the Stockholm Declaration, its founding document.

All European Union 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 for combating anti-Semitism, and we note the publication on 21 January by the European Commission in co-operation with the German Chairmanship of the IHRA of the “Handbook for the practical use of the IHRA working definition of antisemitism”. We take note of the adoption by the IHRA last October of a non-legally binding working definition of antigypsyism/anti-Roma discrimination, which could also play a useful role in combating racism and discrimination.

Finally, allow me to assure you, Madam Küchler, and also the Greek Chairmanship of the IHRA, which will start in March, of the European Union’s steadfast support to ensure that the Holocaust and its victims are never forgotten.

The candidate countries the Republic of North Macedonia<sup>1</sup>, Montenegro<sup>1</sup>, Serbia<sup>1</sup> and Albania<sup>1</sup>, 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, Monaco and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

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