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MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE CLOSE OF THE OSCE CONFERENCE ON ANTI-SEMITISM**

Berlin, 29 April 2004

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we have all been left with an extremely powerful impression by the conference organized by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe on the subject of anti-Semitism — a deeply immoral and criminal manifestation of one person's hatred towards another. Tomorrow we shall return to our countries fully aware of the tasks facing us in overcoming this specific form of racism and xenophobia which continues to inflict suffering on our fellow citizens and undermine the moral health of society.

I should like to assure you that in a country which has given the world brilliant examples of the contribution made by great Jewish scholars, musicians, authors, politicians and human rights activists to the history of a multi-ethnic, multilingual Russia, and examples of mutual aid and co-operation between peoples, we they have a clear understanding of what anti-Semitism can do to mankind. As recently as March of this year, Moscow hosted a major conference entitled "Ways of Overcoming Xenophobia, Racism, Discrimination and Anti-Semitism in the Multinational Russian Federation". The Russian authorities have focused efforts on reviving Jewish communities, passing anti-discrimination laws and weaving the principles of tolerance into the fabric of society.

In addition, a broad "Public Campaign to Combat Racism, Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism and Ethnic Discrimination" is under way in Russia. In many of our country's cities a hotline has been set up for those who have suffered from any form of racial discrimination.

Nevertheless, it is too early for us all to rest on our laurels. The number of cases of anti-Semitism is not falling; at the same time, radical youth organizations and groups are emerging that preach an ideology of hate. The level of anti-Semitism in Europe is considered to be the highest that it has been at any time in the last 60 years, or since the end of the war. The distribution of anti-Semitic propaganda on the Internet has taken on such dimensions that it has been likened to an epidemic. This is the sad reality; and out of respect for the memory of the victims of the Holocaust, and to be able to face our own children, we do not have the right to turn a blind eye to every case of an attack on human dignity, a violent act prompted

by hate or propaganda hostile to particular ethnic groups or religions. There is no choice but for the whole world to actively counter anti-Semitism.

We have repeatedly emphasized at our Conference that States and executive and legislative organs have a special responsibility to create a zero-tolerance climate towards any manifestation of anti-Semitism or other forms of racism or xenophobia. I should like to add that politicians must take a clear and unambiguous position by completely ruling out the possibility of manipulating the public consciousness, and of playing a populist game with economic difficulties and serious social problems.

We welcome the tireless efforts of voluntary organizations in combating anti-Semitism and we should recognize that without the institutions of civil society and without the co-operation between the authorities and non-governmental organizations, such a struggle would be inconceivable today.

The law enforcement agencies have a great responsibility to closely follow the letter of the law and to punish those who are guilty of hate crimes. Statistics kept at government level are far from reliable everywhere; more often we see attempts to disguise the motives for criminal activities as “hooliganism” and to treat infringements of the law and criminal offences as unrelated to inter-ethnic relations. In that connection, we view the decision by the OSCE Permanent Council and its call for participating States to gather this kind of statistical information as extremely timely.

It is difficult to overestimate the role of education in overcoming ignorance and prejudice, and in promoting the principles of tolerance and the fundamentals of basic human rights and freedoms. I am convinced that in this regard the OSCE, together with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other organizations, can make a significant contribution.

It was also quite right to address the role of a democratic press in dispelling the myths that continue to feed anti-Semitism by appealing to the lowest, most primitive instincts of people feeling the pressure of social and economic problems, unresolved conflicts and the consequences of global threats and contemporary challenges.

Among the new threats posing a real danger to democracy, we include the revival of neo-Nazism and the growth of rightist extremism in several countries in the OSCE area. Is this not an outrage upon the memory of the victims of the Holocaust? I should like to recall the words of a Nobel laureate, the American writer Elie Wiesel: “Not all victims of fascism were Jews, but all Jews were victims of Nazism”. At the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust in 2000, this same sentiment was repeated by Göran Persson, the Swedish Prime Minister, who said: “Once again we hear the echo of evil. Once again we are seeing the message of mindless violence in music, in magazines and on the Internet — in Sweden, in the United States of America, in Great Britain and around the world. Nazis are marching on the streets of Europe. There is no room for compromise. There is no time for doubt. Every swastika and every arm raised in greeting is a warning. And if we pretend not to hear, if we turn away, we are betraying democracy and human dignity”.

It is for this reason that my country finds unacceptable — as do, I hope, other countries of the anti-Hitler coalition — any attempt to glorify the memory of accomplices to Nazism, whether they be former legionnaires of the Waffen SS, or any of the other

collaborators who exterminated hundreds and hundreds of thousands of peaceful civilians, servicemen and prisoners in concentration camps on the territories of Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Poland and other countries. The world paid too high a price for underestimating the threat of Nazism to close its eyes to attempts to revive it 60 years after victory in the Second World War. That is why we welcome efforts by organizations such as the British voluntary organization Holocaust Education Trust and its project to find the graves belonging to the victims of Nazism from the Jewish community in the Baltic States; in Latvia and Lithuania alone over 200,000 Jews were killed during the Second World War.

Every year the world marks Holocaust Memorial Day. But this does not mean, Mr. Chairman, that we can forget about it on other days. We welcome the determination of the OSCE to unite the efforts of democratic countries and to turn declarations into concrete actions. A strong political impulse transmitted from Vienna and Berlin should set in motion a major offensive against anti-Semitism — a political, legal, educational, cultural and civil offensive — for the sake of the ideals of democracy, European security and stability.