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DEPUTY MINISTER OF CULTURE AND MEDIA OF THE  
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE  
OSCE CONFERENCE ON ANTI-SEMITISM**

Berlin, 28–29 April 2004

Mr. Chairman,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Friends,

Even before we came to Berlin, we were all opposed to anti-Semitism. The work of the Conference has strengthened our opposition to it even further. My country views this as the first significant outcome of this international forum.

At present, there is insufficient public condemnation of acts of anti-Semitism and xenophobia, and not enough anti-discrimination laws are being passed. It is important that human rights principles are understood by as many people as possible, that they become part of their culture and *Weltanschauung*, and that they are promoted through the upbringing and education of the young.

In my country, we religiously honour the memory of the victims of Nazism, including the six million victims of the Holocaust, half of whom — three million — were citizens of the USSR. In Moscow there is a Second World War memorial, as well as a Jewish Heritage and Holocaust Museum.

As we implement and build upon the second paragraph of OSCE Decision No. 607, our delegation proposes that we support the establishment and work of centres, based upon Jewish heritage museums, to draw up and implement programmes designed to promote tolerance. The Holocaust was yesterday, but we must remember it forever. Programmes to promote tolerance are our today and tomorrow.

The Russian Ministry of Education was recently involved in the translation into Russian and the nationwide launch of Stéphane Bruchfeld and Paul Levine's internationally renowned book on the Holocaust "Tell Ye Your Children". The profanation of the memory of the victims of Nazism poses a challenge to the international community as a whole. It seems all the more strange that the United States of America and European Union countries saw no reason to support a resolution on this matter at the session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in April 2004, even though this resolution condemns the eulogizing and

glorification of former members of the criminal organization the “Waffen SS”, and declares the justification of manifestations of neo-Nazism unacceptable under any circumstances.

Russia, like other countries, has constantly to seek solutions to the problems of inter-ethnic and interconfessional relations. There are still some small groups of youths with aggressive nationalistic tendencies, and at times short-sighted politicians try to exploit this issue and sections of the media add fuel to the fire. But today one cannot speak of manifestations of anti-Semitism in the actions of the Russian authorities, still less at the level of State policy, as was unfortunately common in previous centuries. This just does not happen.

It has long been universally recognized that citizens of Jewish origin have complete freedom to travel. However, despite our objections, the notorious Jackson-Vanik Amendment is still in force. We continue to trust that American legislators will finally solve this problem.

It is important for us to realize that religious and ethnic diversity in the OSCE area is a precious asset for all of its peoples. The OSCE is endeavouring to become a community of nations which preserve their cultural and historical identity, but at the same time are united by common humanitarian values. The rule of such a community should be the immediate and total rejection of all forms of anti-Semitism and xenophobia, and of political, ethnic or religious extremism linked with these phenomena. In that connection, we are particularly troubled by the rise in a number of OSCE countries of chauvinistic and neo-Nazi tendencies which pose a threat to democracy and human rights.

We support the view that the problem of eradicating racial and ethnic prejudices, and of combating hatred towards members of a particular race, religion or ethnic or linguistic group must be tackled by each country on its own, as well as through the joint, co-ordinated efforts of the world community as a whole.

In this connection, we particularly note the role of the OSCE, which in co-operation with the Council of Europe is an extremely important institution for establishing international standards, and a mechanism for countering negative phenomena. In fact, within the framework of the OSCE conferences and meetings on the subject of anti-Semitism are gradually becoming a regular occurrence. And this is a positive trend. In the OSCE area, there should be more tolerance and a clearer understanding of how to oppose xenophobia, anti-Semitism and racism.

The Constitution of my country, the National Ethnic Policy Concept and the Federal Programme for Countering Extremism are focusing our attention on continuing the task of eradicating the unfortunate legacy of past centuries in this area and tackling a whole range of problems concerning the creation of tolerant relations in society.

In August 2001, the Russian Government approved the Federal Programme for Promoting Tolerant Attitudes and Preventing Extremism, which alongside other measures is introducing the ideas and aims of religious and ethnic tolerance into the curricula of Russian pupils and students of all ages. In connection with this, I cannot fail to mention the words of Russia’s Chief Rabbi Berl Lazar, who recently said that the situation of Jews in Russia and society’s treatment of them following the collapse of the communist dictatorship has fundamentally changed, especially in recent years, since President Putin came to power.

I shall give you some examples.

Today, St. Petersburg is celebrating Israel Day, dedicated to the 56th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel. On this day, in the city on the river Neva, in Russia's largest National Ethnographic Museum, an exhibition has opened entitled "Images of One People", illustrating the traditional way of life of Jews from Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

And in that connection, I propose that we also examine at the conference meetings the question of creating on television, in cinema and in literature a *positive image* of Jews and Russians, of Germans and Turks, of French people and of Chinese people.

Thank you for your attention.