

*OSCE Conference on anti-Semitism and on other forms of intolerance  
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ENGLISH only

**Address by  
H. E. Mr. Mihai-Razvan UNGUREANU,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania**

**Mr. Chairman,  
Your Excellencies,  
Esteemed Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Our topic today does not strike us by its novelty. It strikes, though, by its pervasiveness among our countries, by its persistence in people's minds and by its harmful nature to our society.

We gather yet again to acknowledge that manifestations of racism, xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance remain active at some levels of our societies, while our political commitment to fight against them stands unchallenged. There is a gap between what we commit our countries to and what we witness on the ground. Although zero tolerance towards anti-Semitism and intolerance is our guiding principle, we note with concern the increase of racist violence in Europe, as well as our common shortcomings in identifying its causes and the means to adequately address the issue.

OSCE is the relevant framework to shape and to give value to our work aimed at fostering tolerance and non-discrimination, including combating anti-Semitism. Participating States have agreed in Vienna in 2003 and in Berlin, Paris and Brussels last year that there is a need for individual and collective efforts to combat all forms of racism and anti-Semitism. We were called upon to come forward with best practices and we discovered that states have a common understanding of the racist phenomenon and employ the same tools when fighting anti-Semitism: national action plans, data collection and reporting systems, anti-discrimination laws, institution building, historical commissions,

projects to increase awareness and disseminate knowledge as well as programs of education and information.

Thus, we are offensive. We teach tolerance for diversity. We seek moral clarity to uncover anti-Semitism in its subtle ways. We put up moral courage to stand against those with rotten mentalities.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Anti-Semitism is not latent, nor should our response be. I am the bearer of the message of my Government, for there should be no ambiguity as to Romania's attitude towards manifestations of racism. Romania will stand firm in its commitment to fight discrimination and intolerance. Competent authorities have been entrusted with the responsibility to sanction those whose prejudices harm our society.

Legislation enacted in my country bans public denial of the Holocaust and condemns all actions of racist and xenophobic nature. Monuments commemorating the Holocaust victims have been erected; a National Remembrance Day - established; the Holocaust phenomenon is studied in schools and the National Archives allow unconditioned access to the researchers studying the Jews' history in Romania and the neighboring territories. Scholars will soon have a fitted environment for their research as we prepare for establishing a Holocaust Studies Institute and a Holocaust Museum.

An important landmark was the creation of the International Commission with a mandate to take us profoundly in our history and help us come to terms with it.

Romania's membership to the International Task Force on Holocaust is a standing commitment of my Government to prevent and fight anti-Semitism in my country.

Romania recognizes the necessity to conduct an uncompromising struggle against aggressive ethnic intolerance, both by political and legislative means, and by promoting awareness and understanding of the subject. We must

strengthen our reflexes to come forward with strong messages anytime racist behaviors are manifest.

In this respect, it should be noted that recent outbursts of verbal ethnic violence against Roma in Romania, during a series of sports events, did not pass unsanctioned. Preventing and combating discrimination against persons belonging to the Roma minority are challenges and stand at the core of all our efforts to build a tolerant society, a society prepared to take its place among the European ones. Romania's aspiration to join the European Union, less than two years from now, apart from compliance with a set of criteria, extends very much over societal compatibility. From this perspective we look forward to joining a Union that is confident with its enriching diversity and promotes tolerance in forging communities of shared values.

Before concluding, let me take a moment to recognize the substantial contributions of the NGO's to addressing the issue of intolerance, which continues to affect the countries of the Organization. Their perspectives and insightful recommendations on enhancing cooperation between our countries are well taken. It is our hope that the proposals and initiatives outlined in this debate these two days will be considered carefully and will provide valuable input for ODIHR's work. We commend all accomplishments of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in the area of fighting intolerance, through its Program for Tolerance and Nondiscrimination. This is an essential tool for disseminating best practices and deserves all our support.

**Mr. Chairman,**

By assuming the past, drawing the necessary lessons and carefully considering the experience of anti-Semitism, we may determine how best to respond to other forms of racism and intolerance. We have joined together in a symbolic venue, in a symbolic year, to recognize that the problem of anti-Semitism is certainly not anywhere close to being done with. Therefore, the debates of today and

tomorrow will provide the foundation for the subsequent deliberations, which are very much a need to our Organization. Let us all reflect in the coming months how best to assess the overall implementation of our commitments and the decisions taken within our Organization related to fighting anti-Semitism and intolerance. An evaluation process, apart from its intrinsic worth, will give us the opportunity to mirror our common successes and shortcomings and to decide on the future steps.

Thank you.