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STATEMENT BY MR. AVIV SHIR-ON, AMBASSADOR OF ISRAEL AT THE 792 MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL

January 28, 2010

First allow me to express Israel's appreciation for the statements made here today by my distinguished colleagues.

The UN General Assembly decided 5 years ago that the 27th of January, the day on which Auschwitz-Birkenau the Nazi largest death camp was liberated by the Red Army will be the International Holocaust Memorial Day.

The international community commemorated yesterday the victims of the Shoah in various events all over the world, including of course in many member states of the OSCE also here in Vienna and in partners for cooperation countries.

Mr. Chairman,

The idea of an international Memorial Day was conceived not only because the Holocaust stands as an unprecedented expression in human history of discrimination, Anti-Semitism and genocide but mainly because it is our duty to remember and to educate so that such atrocities will never happen again.

In 1999 a Task Force for International Cooperation in Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF) was founded.

The ITF includes today 27 Member States that are committed to the responsibility of fighting genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, xenophobia, Anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial. Israel is this year's chairman of the ITF.

The State of Israel is at the forefront of the struggle against Holocaust denial and Anti-Semitism. Discrimination and religious persecution are not only Jewish issues but a rather global challenge that affects people throughout the world and need to be met by the international community. Those who respect basic moral values, human dignity and freedom have to join forces to confront those who want to destroy them.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the OSCE, especially ODIHR, for its outstanding work on Holocaust education and the fight against Holocaust denial. We would also like to thank Rabbi Andrew Baker, Personal Representative of the Chairman in Office on Combating Anti-Semitism for his work on these issues within the OSCE region. We fully support the seriousness in which the Kazakh chairmanship is handling these issues.

In this framework it is important to mention the valuable work of the other two Personal Representatives of the Chairman in Office Ambassador Adil Akhmetov, Personal Representative on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims and Mr. Mario Mauro, Personal Representative on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of other Religions. The work of the three Personal Representatives is an excellent example of the efforts of the OSCE to make this world safer and to create a better future for all. Thank you.