

***Republic of Bulgaria
The President***

Sofia, 28 April 2004

Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The very fact of this gathering here today is important and significant. It sends a positive message that we the member states of OSCE confirm our commitment to promote tolerance, openness and dialogue – the fundamental democratic values that have inspired many glorious moments in our common history.

History, however, has its dark chapters, and the phenomenon of anti-Semitism, as one of the extreme forms of racism, xenophobia and intolerance, has been teaching us many lessons. Some of these lessons are especially valid today, in the very dawn of the 21st century, as we all strive for lasting security and stability.

In the pursuit of this vision, we have to bear constantly in mind the extreme complexity of the challenges we face, challenges that sometimes go to the very heart of our value system. And here we refer also to anti-Semitism, as perhaps one of the most ancient and persistent manifestations of intolerance.

Anti-Semitism has always been something very foreign to my country and people. In Bulgaria we do not understand this phenomenon. Bulgaria has always been a country of tolerance, and the Bulgarians have always been a tolerant nation. There are plenty of examples that can prove this fact. Suffice it to recall that in the years of darkest obscurantism in Europe, the Bulgarian people rescued 48 thousand fellow countrymen of Jewish origin from deportation to the Nazi death camps.

***To the participants
In the OSCE Conference on anti-Semitism
B e r l i n***

The need to fight off any anti-humane theories and practices of this kind is still on the agenda of the international community today. Precisely because of that, Bulgaria, as Chairman in Office of the OSCE, has been working hard in support of all efforts to promote tolerance in all its forms. From the very beginning, Bulgaria has been actively supporting the idea of Germany to host this Conference in Berlin, and to follow up the work started at the OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism, held in Vienna on 19-20 June 2003. The Berlin forum presents us with opportunities to stand united once again in our condemnation of anti-Semitism in all its manifestations, and to confirm our commitment that all acts of racism, xenophobia and discrimination will be dealt with decisively, as we foster peace and security in and outside the OSCE area. As we address the phenomenon of anti-Semitism in all its complexity and various contexts, we should aim at reaching to the root causes and reviewing the whole range of instruments available to deal with this scourge, from police and judicial action to education and social measures. In this way, I believe, we shall enrich the arsenal of actions that each OSCE country and all of us together can continue to take in order to fight anti-Semitism nationally and worldwide.

I wish you a successful conference!

Georgi PARVANOV