

**Technische Universität Berlin****Dr. Juliane Wetzel, Center for Research on Antisemitism**

(Member of the German Bundestag's Expert Forum on Combating Antisemitism; Member of the German delegation of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research)

*[Speech delivered at OSCE Review Conference 2010 in Warsaw, October 6<sup>th</sup> 2010, Working Session 8 "Tolerance and Non-Discrimination II"]*

Distinguished participants,

Anti-Semitism has been a main issue on the OSCE agenda, starting in Vienna 2003, with a follow-up in Berlin 2004 and in Cordoba 2005. According to **DECISION No. 12/04** and **DECISION No. 10/05**, the OSCE has underscored its commitment to combating anti-Semitism and to promoting education on anti-Semitism in order to ensure a systematic approach in participating states, including curricula related to contemporary forms of anti-Semitism. To fulfill this mandate, ODHIR has undertaken various activities (monitoring, providing hate crime reports), after all it has developed teaching material on anti-Semitism together with the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam and our institute – the Center for Research on Antisemitism, Technical University Berlin. The material covers the phenomenon of anti-Semitism in its historical dimension but focuses even more on contemporary forms of anti-Jewish prejudices. While this material is already implemented and used in classrooms in some countries, others have yet to implement it or have not even undertaken efforts to adapt the material in their respective language.

As anti-Semitic stereotypes might present challenges in the field of Holocaust education, it is important to raise awareness about forms of anti-Semitism that differ from forms of discrimination against other minorities. Discrimination against Jews is generally not based on a racial or religious premise; Jewish people generally have free access to jobs

or to the social support system. Rather, they often are the targets of collective discrimination based on a notion that they are powerful and thus able to influence politics worldwide. Therefore it is not only important to fight against anti-Semitic hate crimes, violent assaults and criminal acts but also against subtle forms of anti-Semitic prejudices. The only way to counteract these latent anti-Semitic clichés is to provide educational tools and to ensure that contemporary forms of anti-Semitism are covered in the curricula, to prevent the hardening of anti-Jewish feelings, which could foster an anti-Semitic ideology in parts of society.

At the same time, the topic of anti-Semitism must be brought to the attention of state and municipal education authorities. Increasing their sensibility is crucial, for without recommendations from politicians and school authorities, the large majority of teachers and pedagogues who do not appreciate the necessity of addressing current forms of anti-Semitism, above and beyond the well-rehearsed routine of excursions to memorial sites and “Holocaust Education”, will not be open to new educational approaches in this thematic complex.

Nevertheless it must be clear that knowledge about the Holocaust is not an antidote to anti-Semitic stereotypes. In fact, there is an anti-Semitic tendency to blame Jews for dominating public discourse with Holocaust-related issues. This displacement of guilt onto Jews is a tool to avoid facing the past and a platform to transport old anti-Semitic stereotypes. Recent surveys by the Anti-Defamation-League showed that in some countries a high percentage of people believe that “Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust.” This shows that media coverage of the theme, while essential, may trigger a feeling of resentment in some and may also feed their false impression that Jews are constantly talking about their fate. The high level of concurrence on this point may also be seen as a defensive reaction against dealing with the past and also as a displacement of blame onto the Jews, who are declared guilty of preventing a “Schlussstrich” – a final closure to discussion of this history.

Ultimately, we have to sensitize the public to the fact that anti-Semitism is not a problem that Jews have to solve. On the contrary, the majority society must become aware that anti-Semitism is still a problem today and will not be solved even if the Middle East

conflict comes to an end – because neither Israel nor “the Jews” are to blame for anti-Semitic stereotypes. These stereotypes exist no matter what Jews do or what happens in Israel.

Parliamentarians work together in the Inter-parliamentary Coalition for Combating Antisemitism, and some countries have initiated the compilation of reports on domestic anti-Semitism. In November 2008, marking the anniversary of the Novemberpogrom 1938, the German Parliament adopted a resolution against anti-Semitism which focuses on support for Jewish life in Germany and intensive work to develop pedagogical measures against anti-Semitic tendencies. The parliamentarians agreed to charge an expert body – of which I am a member - with organizing and supervising this initiative. Based on the so-called “Working definition of anti-Semitism,” one of the main tasks of this expert body is to raise awareness of subtle forms of anti-Semitism that often not recognised as such. **I recommend that other countries follow suit and provide reports on contemporary forms of Antisemitism, also highlighting best practices, so all of us may learn from each other.**