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STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1129th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

26 January 2017

In response to the Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

The European Union welcomes Ambassador Mihnea Constantinescu, whose country currently holds the rotating chairmanship of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).

On the eve of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the European Union joins all those throughout the world who will be commemorating this unprecedented crime in the history of humanity.

The people who suffered and lost their lives during the Holocaust should never be forgotten. We have a duty to inform and educate future generations so as to strengthen our opposition to anti-Semitism and all other forms of discrimination. This is all the more important as anti-Semitism is still relevant in Europe, including in its most violent form, given the recent acts of terrorism aimed particularly at Jewish populations that have taken place on European soil.

The memory of the victims also imposes on us a duty to be vigilant so as to avoid a repetition of the past. The European Union, which was built on the ruins of this past, has established common norms, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, as well as robust legal instruments to protect against these excesses. The OSCE's commitments to combat all forms of intolerance, to promote the rule of law and respect for the fundamental freedoms of all human beings, whatever their specific identity, and to promote dialogue with civil society are also solid reference points. The work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to combat anti-Semitism and intolerance, hate crimes, whatever their motivation, and the exclusion of Roma populations is also a valuable tool available to participating States. In that context, we should like to mention the ODIHR programme Words into Action to Address Anti-Semitism. Between 2016 and 2018, it will organize a multitude of specific activities to address the safety of Jewish communities, the combating of anti-Semitism through education and the development of coalitions among different actors within civil society. We are pleased that through this programme the OSCE is showing its capacity to act in a key area to promote tolerance.

We welcome the adoption by the IHRA under the Romanian chairmanship of a legally non-binding working definition of anti-Semitism. We supported the draft endorsement by the OSCE of this working definition at the Ministerial Council meeting in Hamburg.

The European Union is strongly involved in combating all forms of intolerance and discrimination. Knowledge of history never fosters competition among victims; on the contrary, it builds solidarity among them, beyond differences, and strengthens determination to defend the universal principles of human rights as guaranteed by international treaties. Because of our history, we, the States of the OSCE and European Union, have a duty more than ever to ensure that the diversity of our region remains a source of richness and not of conflict. We assure you of our determination to continue our work on this basis within the OSCE.

Ambassador, allow me in conclusion to quote Elie Wiesel, to whom you paid tribute in your statement: “To forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time.”

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, Serbia¹ and Albania¹, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area Liechtenstein, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

1 The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.