

ENGLISH only

OSCE CONFERENCE ON ANTISEMITISM – CORDOBA – JUNE 8, 2005

Statement by Daniel S. Mariaschin
Executive Vice President
B'nai B'rith International

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

At the OSCE's historic first conference on anti-Semitism, in Vienna in June 2003, B'nai B'rith International urged that this Organization make the deliberations on anti-Semitism "more than just a one-time event."

We had experienced such a long history – up until the Holocaust and even the decades since – of a lack of will in the international community to address, let alone seriously fight, anti-Semitism. This, despite the fact that, particularly in Europe, we know all too well the deadly consequences of leaving anti-Semitism unchecked, of assuming that Jews – often the first victims of a stubborn, primitive, violent hatred – will also be the last.

Thus, in 2003, few of us could have predicted that the conference in Vienna would be followed by one the very next year in Berlin, only to be followed again, this year, by another in Cordoba. Indeed, just months ago, few of us could have been confident that an OSCE member state might offer to host a fourth conference next year, as several member states recently have done.

So, while fighting anti-Semitism is in the interest of us all and is clearly a high moral imperative, I submit that we can take a moment to appreciate this milestone – and to recognize all those, particularly our Spanish hosts and the OSCE Chair-in-Office, who have made it possible. These now-*annual* meetings represent a real source of hope.

Which brings me to what must be our focus: doing something, practically and effectively, to combat, contain, and, wherever possible, eradicate anti-Semitism. It is simply unacceptable that hatred of Jews continues to threaten citizens and communities in many of the OSCE's 55 member countries, and beyond the OSCE region.

To this end, we must continue to make discussions of anti-Semitism "more than just a one-time event" – and, for that matter, more than mere discussions.

We must broadly advance the spirit of zero-tolerance for anti-Semitism cultivated at these OSCE gatherings, by steadfastly implementing relevant programs of action – in education, legislation, and law enforcement.

We should adopt, within the OSCE, the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia's working definition of anti-Semitism, and provide for the utilization of that EUMC standard in the monitoring efforts of ODIHR.

We must bolster the funding of ODIHR and the staffing of its anti-Semitism-related programs, so that it can expand its critical work.

We must extend, for the foreseeable future, the terms of the OSCE Chair-in-Office's personal representatives on intolerance, who direct sustained attention, at the highest level, to the problem of anti-Semitism.

We must maintain our commitment to the specialized treatment of the roots and manifestations of anti-Semitism, even as we fittingly deplore and take firm steps to address intolerance in its many forms.

Finally, we must strongly reiterate and proactively reinforce the crucial principle declared at last year's Berlin conference: that no political position, cause or grievance can ever justify anti-Semitism. We must further make clear, once and for all, that the delegitimization and demonization of Israel is often none other than anti-Semitism in a different guise. Like any other democratic country, Israel expects to endure responsible criticism of its government's policies. But denial of the Jewish right to self-determination – to peace and security for Jews in their homeland – is, very simply, anti-Semitism. To employ terrorism and to intimidate and incite against Jews – in schoolbooks, sermons, television broadcasts, or Internet materials – is most certainly anti-Semitism. In Europe or anywhere, let us not apologize for hatred, and let us not turn a blind eye to criminality.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

It is fitting, and encouraging, that 60 years after the end of World War II, Europe and its friends are uniting to tackle anti-Semitism. Intolerance is by no means limited to the jurisdiction of the OSCE's 55 member states, but it is noble, and necessary, that we here today lead by standing decisively and unmistakably against anti-Semitism, in both word and deed. By so doing, we will create a more secure Europe, and a better world.

Thank you for your commitment and your leadership.