



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **On the Occasion of the 71st Anniversary of the End of World War II**

As delivered by U.S. Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
May 12, 2016

Before I begin let me also thank you for your own statement on behalf of Germany, which I found particularly poignant.

On May 8 and 9, many OSCE participating States, including the United States, marked the 71st anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe. The United States will commemorate the end of the war in Asia on August 15. It is fitting that we, as participants in an organization committed to security and cooperation from Vancouver to Vladivostok, reflect on a conflict during which an estimated 60 million people lost their lives.

Commemorating the end of World War II in Europe offers an opportunity for us to recognize the sacrifice of those who fought to end the vicious tyranny of Nazism and fascism as well as to mourn its victims. By commemorating the conclusion of a European war that became a global conflict, the United States reaffirms its commitment to a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace, united in values that the OSCE represents.

The United States remembers the sacrifices made by the alliance of nations that fought Nazism and fascism. We remember our own soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines who died far from home. We honor the soldiers of all allied nations alongside whom our troops fought, and fell. We honor those throughout Europe who died defending their people and their homelands. We remember the six million Jews systematically murdered in the Holocaust and the millions of others who fell victim to Nazi and fascist policies and atrocities. We mourn them all.

At last week's Permanent Council, and at many others, we heard concerns expressed about attempts to rewrite the history of World War II. Holocaust denial, for example, is an attempt to twist history, as are efforts to rehabilitate Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and other fascists and extremists. We should, therefore, remember that World War II began with the invasion of Poland in September 1939, and not in 1941 as was suggested during the last Permanent Council.

History is twisted when unwarranted accusations of neo-Nazism and aggressive nationalism are used to deflect criticism from one's own violations of international norms. It is unconscionable to exploit the memories of and marginalize the suffering of those who fought and died in World

War II for the political expediencies of the present. Those who died deserve a full measure of honor. This cannot be accomplished with a half version of history.

Rather than rewrite history, we should teach to future generations history's sobering lessons. We should teach about the horrors that spring from hate and about human beings' capacity for inhumanity. We must encourage future generations to avoid similar catastrophes. We must uphold and strengthen democratic institutions, refrain from the threat or use of force, and advance respect for human rights, the rule of law, and tolerance.

We should celebrate – and never take for granted -- the incredible progress Europe has made towards reconciliation, reconstruction, and integration. We should celebrate -- and never be complacent about -- a transatlantic community governed by shared values and shared responsibilities to uphold peace and security.

The European Union is an essential part of this community, and provides an enduring example of democracy, liberty, and prosperity achieved through the common purpose of diverse peoples and governments. We congratulate the people of Europe as they celebrate Europe Day. The Helsinki Final Act and the OSCE and its institutions are part of the foundation of principles and values on which this community rests.

We most fittingly honor those whose sacrifice won victory in Europe seventy-one years ago by continuing to build a freer, more just, law-based, and peaceful OSCE region and world.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.