

STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1174th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

1 February 2018

In response to the Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

The European Union welcomes Mr. Michele Galizia as representative of the Swiss Chairmanship of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).

International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January marks the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camps by the Red Army and honours the memory of the six million Jewish victims of the Nazi ideology. In her statement, the High Representative of the European Union recalled the role played by the Holocaust and the Second World War in modern European history: “Our European Union was founded on the desire to say ‘never again’. The Nazi regime and its allies tried to destroy Europe’s diversity – by killing Jews, Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, people with disabilities, everyone who did not share the Nazi ideology. After this tragedy – the greatest tragedy in human history – we embraced our diversity and made it the foundation of our Union.” It is to prevent these horrors that we founded a Union based on human rights, democracy, the rule of law and non-discrimination.

And yet, more than 70 years later, we are seeing a rise in anti-Semitism, discrimination and hate speech throughout the OSCE area. This confirms our duty to remember: the people who suffered and lost their lives during the Holocaust must never be forgotten. We have a duty to inform and educate future generations so as to strengthen our opposition to anti-Semitism and all forms of discrimination.

The memory of the victims also demands that we remain vigilant to avoid a repetition of the past and to strongly condemn revisionism and denial of the past. This is all the more important as the number of Holocaust survivors dwindles. We should like here to pay homage to the memory of Simone Veil, a survivor and the first President of the European Parliament, who devoted her life to reconciliation in Europe.

Over the years, the OSCE has compiled a body of major commitments to counter anti-Semitism, consolidated in particular at the Berlin conference in 2004 and then ten years later in Basel. These commitments are part of a wider set of undertakings by the OSCE to combat all forms of intolerance and to promote the rule of law and universal respect for fundamental freedoms. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) also has an important mandate to combat anti-Semitism and hate crimes, which participating States can avail themselves of by asking for its assistance. In particular, the ODIHR

programme “Words into Action” devotes considerable resources to combating anti-Semitism by way of a three-pronged approach: addressing the security needs of Jewish communities, countering anti-Semitism through education, and fostering coalition-building among different civil society actors.

Mr. Galizia,

We regard the legally non-binding working definition of anti-Semitism adopted by the IHRA in 2016 as a very useful instrument for combating anti-Semitism.

The European Union is strongly committed to combating all forms of intolerance and discrimination. At a time of growing tensions, recalling our shared principles and foundation for combating all forms of intolerance, namely affirming the equal dignity of human beings and combating intolerance of others because they are different, is the best bulwark against the spiral of hate. These principles and priorities are at the core of the OSCE’s commitments and should continue more than ever to guide us in our work within the Organization.

In conclusion, we should like to take this opportunity to thank the Italian OSCE Chairmanship for the successful organization of the conference on the responsibility of States, institutions and individuals in the fight against anti-Semitism in the OSCE area held on 29 January in Rome. It recalled the degree to which the issues of anti-Semitism and intolerance are still relevant and could present a threat to our collective security and to our democracies.

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 countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and 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.