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## United States Mission to the OSCE **Statement on Anti-Semitism**

Delivered by Daniel S. Mariaschin, Executive V-P, B'nai B'rith International, at the Anti-Semitism Conference, Vienna  
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is nearly 60 years since European countries saw first-hand the devastating results of not speaking out early and forcefully against anti-Semitism. It is hard to believe that with the passage of six decades there would be a need for this conference, yet there is.

We are here not to "preach to the choir" – for we would not be here if we were all not already committed to wiping out the world's longest and most virulent human rights violation – anti-Semitism.

This disease has gained a foothold in Europe and is spreading beyond the borders of this continent.

We are here to suggest there is a new strain of anti-Semitism in Europe. It has a new name – Judeo-Phobia – it is the same virus, but more silent than the violent outbursts that so affect this continent, but no less insidious and no less destructive to the host that harbors it.

There is a troubling notion currently popular in the OSCE areas and beyond: it is a preoccupation with anti-Zionism. Globally, we are witnessing the rhetoric of Judeo-Phobia, which combines hatred for Israel with hatred for Jews. When those, unfortunately there are many who do, compare Israeli-Jews to Nazis, a red line has been crossed. This rhetoric, now used in common speech, is just as anti-Semitic as when they called Jews, "Christ killers" in times past. That is why we must educate people about the benefits to those countries that enact legislation, educate their public, and publicly speak out on the correct ways to treat the minority in their midst.

At a pivotal time in history, when the nations of the world are engaged in a colossal struggle against the new challenges posed by world terrorism, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has rightly made terrorism an important focus of its mission. This is consistent with OSCE's stated mandate of actively working on "early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation."

There are those who hoped the virus of anti-Semitism had been defeated. After the Holocaust and World War II, most of us believed that it was losing its appeal. Even today, there are those who say the recent acts of violence and protests against Jews are the acts of a few extremists buoyed by the conflict in the Middle East. Unfortunately, evidence suggests the contrary.

Rising physical attacks, verbal slurs and hate messages on the Internet, especially over the past 3 years, have reached epidemic proportions. This is why European leaders should not wait another moment to acknowledge the scope of anti-Semitism across the continent and to focus efforts to deal with it. Clearly the OSCE is an appropriate international body that can take a lead in addressing these issues before this generation, too, has to start wondering how something like this could happen. An important part of the OSCE's human rights mission and often a terrorist motivator, is ethnic hatred. As we have too often seen in the past, ethnic hatred starts small, gains momentum and then spins out of control.

And while awareness is important, we must do more than call attention to acts of anti-Semitism. We must act to drive anti-Semitism and all forms of ethnic hatred from any sense of social acceptance. We must find ways to identify and address the causes of anti-Semitism and why it is once again gaining traction in Europe. The importance of governmental leaders speaking out when these incidents and acts occur should not be underestimated. Immediate response from the highest levels of government -- prime ministers, cabinet members, and parliamentarians -- is the first and one of the best antidotes to this scourge.

The OSCE has defined anti-Semitism as "a separate and unique form of racism," and that is a good first step. But it is only a first step. To achieve the successful outcome we want, we call on the Chair to take the conference's resolutions of this resurgent problem to the Human Dimension conference in Warsaw in October. Beyond that, we hope and expect that this will be placed on the agenda at the OSCE Ministerial meeting in Rotterdam this December. Such an emphasis would signal Europe's determination to stamp out anti-Semitism for good and would make it clear that hatred towards Jews and other ethnic groups will not be tolerated.

Mr. Chairman, only a major international gathering of this kind can create the opportunity for nations to be put on record about this important human rights problem. While not a complete solution, this conference is a late but critical first step in responding to the reality that sadly still exists in the OSCE region.

Despite its history and the many lessons learned, an undercurrent of anti-Semitism has simmered for too long, particularly in Europe. Clearly the tide of anti-Semitism and Judeo-phobia is rising. It must be dealt with immediately, decisively and continuously. Not just for the victims of ethnic hatred, but also for the people who must live amid its squalor, it is incumbent on the OSCE's leaders to act aggressively and decisively to keep this menace in check. This is where the OSCE, and all of us, can make an important difference.

The role of NGOs in reporting on, and monitoring anti-Semitism is vital to achieving the objectives we are gathered here to discuss. NGOs are close to the grass roots, and they are in a unique position to “take the temperature” of anti-Semitism on an ongoing basis.

Annual audits of anti-Semitic acts, national and community-wide educational programs, and ongoing relations with the media, allows NGOs to be a premier force for the good in this effort.

Working together with national governments, NGOs can provide the bridge for both the flow of information and the means to confront anti-Semitism and its source. The work of the Internal Task Force on Holocaust Education and Remembrance is a good case in point.

The fact that many NGOs have sought to be accredited at this gathering is both noteworthy and encouraging.

When we leave here tomorrow afternoon, our work begins in earnest. We urge the OSCE to make this more than just a one-time event, and that the “temperature taking” and the remedies will go forward on a regular, and timely basis.

Thank you.