

10th Anniversary of the OSCE's Berlin Conference on Anti-Semitism

High-Level Commemorative Event

13 November 2014

Berlin



Opening address by

Michael Georg Link

Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Check against delivery!

Excellency, President of Switzerland,

Excellency, Minister Steinmeier,

Ministers,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to welcome all of you on behalf of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

Let me especially greet the representatives of Jewish community organizations, Jewish student organizations and grass roots initiatives that counter anti-Semitism at the local level. Let me welcome the experts committed to the topic and all civic leaders and activists who have come here with the strong commitment to promote dialogue and build coalitions against anti-Semitism. We at ODIHR are your ally in the struggle against anti-Semitism.

Let me also thank our generous supporters and donors who have made it possible for us to invite you to Berlin:

- The Federal Government of Germany, represented by our host, Minister Steinmeier,
- the Swiss Government, represented by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, President Didier Burkhalter,
- the governments of Italy and the United States,
- and the Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility and Future (EVZ).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The fact that so many of you have come here today makes one thing very clear: We are not only gathered to commemorate the 2004 Berlin Declaration, we are here because we remain concerned about anti-Semitism in the OSCE region, and

because we stand ready to face this challenge and build upon the Declaration and even take it a step further.

The city of Berlin is an excellent place for this meeting because it symbolises the history of the 20th century. Some of you may have had a chance to arrive early and experience the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9th. While this day marks one of the happiest episodes in German history, it also stands for one of its darkest chapters: The “Pogromnacht”, or, as it is sometimes called in English, the “Night of the Broken Glass”. November 9th eternally reminds us, in the midst of the joyful reunification celebrations, about the fragility of civilisation if anti-Semitism isn’t fought at its very roots.

On November 9th, 1938, Nazi Germany finally revealed its ugly face with this series of co-ordinated attacks against Jews and their property. And as we think back with horror about how the streets of Berlin and other German cities were littered with

shards of broken glass from the smashed windows of Jewish-owned stores, buildings, and synagogues, we all know that this only marked the beginning of the incomprehensible crime against humanity which later became known as the Holocaust.

While these events took place some 70 years ago, the issue of anti-Semitism still exists and remains of great concern to us.

It remains a concern here in Germany, where recent statistics have shown a surge in anti-Semitism, and in many other places. And while the Gaza conflict reached a new degree of escalation this summer, we were all shocked to see a new wave of anti-Semitic assemblies and attacks all over Europe.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today is a day for us to discuss these disturbing developments, and to take stock about the implementation of our OSCE commitments.

As ODIHR Director, it is my responsibility to support OSCE participating States with the implementation of their human dimension commitments – but it is also my duty to speak out when these commitments aren't met.

The special significance of the 2004 Berlin Declaration and subsequent Ministerial Council Decisions is that they provide the foundation of this commitment to take on the challenge of anti-Semitism and provide clear measures for an effective response, from the importance of education to the investigation and prosecution of anti-Semitic hate crime.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Luckily, a lot of progress has been made and there are many positive stories that can be told on a day like this: About committed political leaders who do not hesitate to condemn

anti-Semitism wherever and whenever it shows itself, about police officers who work on the front line and provide support to victims of hate crime, about educators who use their insights and creativity to identify effective ways to teach about anti-Semitism and about civil society activists who use their limited resources to make a difference.

Indeed, a lot has been put in place since 2004: First and foremost, the Berlin Declaration put the need for a specific educational approach to counter anti-Semitism on the OSCE's agenda. The teaching materials ODIHR developed with the Anne Frank House as a consequence of the Berlin Declaration have been successfully implemented in 14 OSCE participating States. It is thanks to the enthusiasm and commitment of the non-governmental organizations, but also local educational authorities and government agencies, that this tool reached so many teachers and students. Let me use this opportunity to thank all the experts that have spearheaded this project in collaboration with ODIHR – many of you are here today.

Another key area is hate crime. My institution has created a number of technical assistance programmes for law enforcement and prosecutors, exemplified by our Training against Hate Crimes for Law Enforcement (TAHCLE) and Prosecutors and Hate Crimes Training (PAHCT) programmes. Since 2007, for example, Poland has with ODIHR's help trained more than 70,000 police officers on hate crime. Croatia and Bulgaria have trained many thousands more, and we are currently working on implementing these programmes in Italy, Montenegro, Greece and many other countries all over the OSCE.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are not gathered here to only talk about the positive effects of our work. The most important part of taking stock is to address the challenges we're facing: Of the many areas for action in addressing anti-Semitism effectively, one of the most

serious and challenging is anti-Semitic hate crime. Since 2006, annual data released by ODIHR reveals several stubborn trends on states' responses to anti-Semitic hate crime. Since 2009, only twelve participating States have reported specific data on anti-Semitic hate crime annually. Furthermore, the data that does exist suggests significant under reporting by victims. This is a worrying indication of the implementation gap when it comes to OSCE commitments on recording anti-Semitic hate crimes and encouraging victims to report it.

Today is an opportunity for OSCE participating States to recommit to the Berlin Declaration and even to take it a step further. I invite the governments of our participating States to use ODIHR as a key partner in raising awareness about anti-Semitism.

Let me also send a special message to civil society and invite you to co-operate with ODIHR wherever possible –use our tools, trainings and the fora provided by the OSCE, I am

thinking in particular of the annual Human Dimension

Implementation Meetings in Warsaw. Call on us to take action wherever and whenever you think we can make a difference in facilitating conversations with your government about anti-Semitism and challenges related to Holocaust remembrance and education.

One of the main themes that ran throughout the discussions during yesterday's Civil Society Forum was the need to build strong civil society intercommunal and interfaith networks.

Another topic that came up several times was the request to call upon participating States to strengthen ODIHR's monitoring capabilities in the area of anti-Semitism. We stand ready to take up this challenge.

Thank you very much for your attention!