

**REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA**

Statement by the Delegation of Slovenia
at the OSCE Conference on Combating and Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding

Plenary session 1: Combating anti-Semitism

Mr Chairman,

Slovenia strongly condemns anti-Semitism and all other forms of racism, racial discrimination, intolerance and discrimination and understands the importance of the adoption of effective measures to combat the symptoms and causes of racism and discrimination, as well as to effectively guarantee freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief to all without distinction.

It must be noted with great concern that anti-Semitic thinking originating from a variety of sources is spreading across the OSCE region and is assuming new forms and expressions. Governments should take appropriate measures involving education.

The case of Slovenia may not indicate an overall pattern of the present position of Jewish communities and their historical heritage in the OSCE participating states, but it can offer some clarification on the correlation between democracy and equality of ethnic and religious minorities.

Practically non-existent before the 1990s, the Slovenian Jewish community experienced a renaissance in the last decade, succeeding to establish itself as a legitimate religious community.

The Jewish Community of Slovenia has been registered with the Office for Religious Communities of the Republic of Slovenia since 1976. According to the Community's representatives they are now active in the sense of being recognisable, holding several cultural and religious sections for both senior and young members, and a Hebrew section in charge of the language and language teaching. The Jewish Community of Slovenia comprises all elements of a religious community and is active in five Slovenian municipalities.

It is thus documented that at the beginning of the 16th century Jews represented an entire quarter of the population of the town of Maribor. More than 4500 Jews are reported to have been living on Slovenian territory before 1941. Many of them joined the national liberation war and after the capitulation of Italy they even formed their own battalion. After the Second World War a vast majority went abroad.

In trying to find out if and to what extent Slovenia can resist to anti-Semitism, the most appropriate question one should ask might probably be the following: Has Slovenia become more open to the world since the awakening of the Jewish community in the country? The

question may also be inverted: Is it true that in Slovenia there was no anti-Semitism because there were practically no Jews?

The best answers to such questions can be found in everyday life and from those who are the most involved. "There is practically no open, publicly expressed hatred for Jews in Slovenia.

One of the main issues for Slovenia is to reduce the isolation of the Jewish community and to draw the concept of Judaism closer to the majority population. The main objective is to enable a better life together and to allow for the diversity of the other to be an authentic reflection of our own identity.

Last but not least, the Diary of Anne Frank remains obligatory reading for schoolchildren around 12 years of age. In the recent history, the public around the world was given another diary of a girl from Sarajevo, who in her youngest age was asking herself, why people had to go through the hellish experience of the war. Lessons of history are often forgotten. Repeating them over and over again is a must. We are aware of the lack of knowledge on the Holocaust in the Slovene education system.

Education is therefore the key word in finding the answer to the problems of combating discrimination including anti-Semitism.

Thank you.