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# Statement

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## **2004/24 CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

### **NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY**

**THE HONOURABLE BILL GRAHAM,**

**MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,**

**AT THE**

**ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

**CONFERENCE ON ANTI-SEMITISM**

**BERLIN, Germany**

**April 28, 2004**

"Nothing dies so hard or rallies so often as intolerance." The truth of these words, spoken by the U.S. abolitionist preacher Henry Ward Beecher, is what brings us here today. A decade ago, few could have imagined that our nations would be coming together in this city, at this time in history, to address resurgent anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination. I thank our German hosts and the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] for having the initiative to organize this important conference.

For my country, the need for a conference of this kind has recently, alas, become all too evident. Canadians pride themselves on sharing common citizenship in a successful pluralist society marked by respect for diversity. Yet we too are still struggling to achieve these ideals. And since last year's OSCE conference on anti-Semitism, Canada has had to confront the reality of disgraceful attacks on our Jewish community, including hateful graffiti, vandalism, the desecration of cemeteries and the firebombing of a Jewish elementary school. We have also experienced attacks on Muslims in Canada. And as the visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on Racism reminded us, other forms of discrimination continue to plague our society.

These trends are deeply disturbing to a country such as Canada. They have instilled great concern in the Jewish community and led to soul-searching among all of our citizens committed to ensuring that our country continues to be a model of pluralism and mutual respect. We have already done much to foster this social model: by adopting a strong legislative framework that prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, colour and religion; by establishing hate crime units in our police forces; and by implementing community dialogue and public education initiatives. But clearly, these efforts are not enough. Together with the countries assembled here, we must, and we will, do more to defeat the virulent new forms of anti-Semitism infecting our societies.

And we must begin by always heeding Elie Wiesel's warning that "there may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest." Protest means reiterating in this forum, as our Prime Minister and other political leaders have done within Canada, that hateful words and actions have no place in our societies. They violate the deepest values that our nations and this organization stand for, values of mutual respect, security and the equality of all of our citizens. The efforts our countries are making both domestically and internationally must be founded on an absolute refusal to tolerate expressions of hate against our Jewish communities.

We must also follow up these words with action, through international cooperation to find the best approaches to take in legislation, policing, research, education and civil society initiatives. Our efforts must reach out to every level of society within and across our countries.

We must also stand united behind another imperative: in this very difficult period in global affairs, the tensions of the Middle East cannot be allowed to undermine the social fabric of our countries.

It would be naive not to recognize that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is having an impact on the way in which our citizens view each other. But whatever the differences our nations and citizens may have on that question, we must not let the turbulence in that region infect our own societies, or serve as a pretext for anti-Semitism or any form of discrimination. Legitimate political debate we must have, but it must be conducted in this spirit. At this conference and within our own nations, all of us must insist on that point.

As we work at this conference on practical measures for combatting anti-Semitism, we know one thing: only in unity can we isolate the voices of hate, deny them any place in our societies and produce the tangible results that [German Minister of Foreign Affairs] Joschka Fischer spoke of. Through dialogue on these issues among nations and communities, we can show that we will fight to preserve the values of mutual respect and equality in the face of those who attack them. Here in this city of Berlin, which has overcome the darkness of hate to build an open, diverse community at the heart of a uniting Europe, we know how much depends on our resolve to succeed in that effort.

Thank you.