



United States Mission to the OSCE
**Safeguarding the Historical Record:
Observing International Holocaust
Remembrance Day**

As delivered by Acting Political Counselor Lane D. Bahl
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
January 31, 2019

Thank you, Mr. Chair and thank you, Ambassador Azzoni, for your eloquent address. It was good to hear your voice again.

Today, as we recall with horror the systematic persecution and brutal murder of six million Jews. In their concentration and death camps and under their inhuman rule, the Nazis and their collaborators also enslaved and killed millions of Slavs, Roma, members of the LGBTI community, persons with disabilities, priests, and political activists. Every generation must learn and apply the lessons of the Holocaust to prevent new horrors against humanity. Today, more than ever, we are faced with the challenge of confronting Holocaust deniers and others who distort the historical record. Holocaust education and commemoration are vital tools to prevent future atrocities, and it is crucial that we instill in our youth an understanding of the perils of anti-Semitism and other forms of hate.

As International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Chair Ambassador De Bernardin said in his statement commemorating this day, “the Holocaust was not an incident of history that came out of the blue, but was the outcome of a process marked by legalized discrimination and the progressive denial of the human rights of individuals and groups. We have learned from experience that hate that begins with one group rarely ends with that group.” Today, manifestations of hate are persisting, evolving, and erupting across the OSCE region, giving new urgency for participating States to respond with immediate, definitive action.

The United States is indebted to the Holocaust’s survivors who share their experience, strength, wisdom, and generosity of spirit, to instill in us the importance of combating intolerance.

The United States thanks the Slovak Chairmanship for hosting a “Conference on Combating Anti-Semitism in the OSCE Region” next week in Bratislava. We applaud your emphasis on education to address anti-Semitism and to confront the challenges and leverage the opportunities of social media in promoting tolerance.

We cannot overstate the practical value of the Alliance’s working definition of anti-Semitism. We commend ODIHR for putting it into practice, and we encourage all participating States to incorporate the definition into their national lexicon. Doing so does not change our

international obligations or our internal laws, but rather ensures that when we discuss anti-Semitism, we are all talking about the same thing.

As ODIHR Director Gisladdottir reminded us in her institution's statement commemorating this day, "the Holocaust provides the strongest example of unbridled prejudice. Each and every one of us, especially those in positions of authority, must take responsibility for combating anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance." A program like ODIHR's *Turning Words into Action to Address Anti-Semitism* provides the tools to continue this important fight. *Words into Action* brings together members of Jewish, Romani, Muslim, immigrant, and other communities across generations from throughout the OSCE region. Participants engage in educational activities, exchange experiences, and build coalitions for combating anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance. *Words Into Action* provides tremendous value, and we must continue to fully support it. This program – specifically designed to combat anti-Semitism – can serve as a model for developing other, complementary programs to address different forms of intolerance.

The United States condemns all forms of hatred and urges others to call out and combat it and all its forms in the OSCE region. In marking Remembrance Day, we acknowledge the Holocaust's dark stain on human history and reject anti-Semitism in both *word and deed*. As Personal Representative on Combating Anti-Semitism Andrew Baker recently said the words "Never Again" must "not [be] an empty phrase, but our guiding principle."

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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