

Speech of State Secretary Szabolcs Takács,
Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA),
to the Permanent Council of the OSCE,
21 January 2016

As the Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, it is a great honour to be able to address you on the solemn occasion of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day. It is a fundamental and important event. In 2005 the United Nations General Assembly designated January 27 as an annual International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. This was a milestone step because it placed Holocaust Remembrance clearly within the remit of states; it is not only the duty of the individually affected communities to commemorate the Holocaust; it is a duty of all mankind and thus, the duty of all governments.

16 years ago, in January 2000, the representatives of 46 governments came together in Stockholm at the International Forum on the Holocaust to commit themselves to further international cooperation on Holocaust education, remembrance and research. The Stockholm Declaration which was adopted at the Forum is the founding document of IHRA; an intergovernmental body of 31 members which functions as a network of policy-makers, academics, educators, curators and experts.

I'm very pleased to state, right at the beginning, that the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights has continuously been a valued International Partner of IHRA since 2004 when they first introduced their portfolio on combatting antisemitism and we have cooperated with ODIHR on various projects, grateful for their insights and experience. The ODIHR is also one of the organizations with which IHRA has a Memorandum of Understanding, designed to ensure close cooperation and facilitate the sharing information.

Holocaust remembrance, education and research: three principle areas of activity within IHRA.

By remembering, we honour the victims of the Holocaust and their families but also the survivors, and those who stood up against the prejudice and violence of the Holocaust era.

But remembering is not only about looking backwards. The importance of Holocaust Remembrance Days is linked to our realization that there is much work still to do; to the realization that prejudice, antisemitism and xenophobia still exist and that genocide is not a historical notion but a current threat and an all too frequent occurrence.

Holocaust remembrance, whether through memorial days or museums or educational programs, constitutes a vital link between history and future behavior. That's why the Holocaust is a universal issue of contemporary importance. IHRA seeks to ensure that not only is the Holocaust never forgotten, but that we draw insights from our study of the past to inform what we do in the future; working towards mutual respect, to a deeper understanding of our differences and so to more just societies.

We remember not only to honor the victims of a tragedy which challenged the foundations of civilization. We do it with a determination that events like the Holocaust should never happen

again and in the hope that the lessons of the past may positively influence the world we live in today and the generations yet to come.

As a Hungarian, I am here also to remember a terrible tragedy of my nation, a horrible chain of events that has shaken our country to the core. The loss of almost six hundred thousand compatriots, the suffering of the whole Hungarian Jewry, inflicted by the Nazis and their collaborators, will always be part of our legacy with an eternal commitment to all that is stated in the Stockholm Declaration.

Remembrance and education are the links between a dark past of dictatorships, the Holocaust and a better future, absent of hatred or prejudice against another other nations or religious groups. That is why we so appreciate the role of IHRA in striving for a peaceful Europe where new generations will grow up with the firm conviction that each of us has the right to respect for their dignity without discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, political or other opinions, nationality or social origin.

This is of vital importance. As violent events and a rising tide of hate crimes and hate speech sweep across Europe, the task of governments is to strengthen the security of our populations, without giving way to xenophobia or compromising on the core values of European civilization.

“If we struggle for a slightly better world – for there will never be good world, but there may possibly be one with a slight improvement – we will succeed. We must not stop struggling; it is worth a lifetime's effort.” Honorary Chairman of IHRA Yehuda Bauer (Speech at the International Conference on Genocide Prevention, 31 March-1 April 2014)