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S T A T E M E N T

by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Serbia to the OSCE and other International Organizations in Vienna, Ambassador Vuk Žugić,
at the 1086 Permanent Council Meeting
21 January 2016

Mr. Chairperson,

Let me begin by welcoming the Secretary of State Takacs and Ambassador Klein to the Permanent Council and thank them for their insightful presentations. We would also like to thank our German colleagues for paying special attention to the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, as we did last year, when our State Secretary Mrs. Ninčić was one of the speakers, and to commend their plans to keep the topic of fighting anti-Semitism very high on their agenda during this year.

Although we align ourselves with the EU Statement, allow me to make a few remarks in our national capacity.

On the occasion of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day we would like to pay tribute to the victims of this tragedy and to reiterate Serbia's strong condemnation of all forms of racism and xenophobia, including Antisemitism.

The unprecedented character of the Holocaust will always hold universal meaning. We are committed to remembering and honoring its victims, to upholding the terrible truth of the Holocaust, to standing up against those who

distort or deny it and to combatting antisemitism, racism and prejudice against the Roma and Sinti. At the same time, we are committed to continue with our international cooperation on Holocaust education, remembrance, research and preventions of future genocides.

Mr. Chairperson,

One of the outcomes of the OSCE Ministerial Council in December 2014 was the Basel Declaration on enhancing efforts to combat anti-Semitism, by which the participating States committed themselves to call on political, religious and civil society leaders to engage in open discussions with a view to combating and preventing anti-Semitism while fully respecting fundamental freedoms and human rights.

We regret the missed opportunity to adopt relevant draft decisions as a follow-up to the Basel Declaration during the recent MC in Belgrade. Nevertheless, we have to strengthen our commitments on combating all forms of intolerance and discrimination in the OSCE area, as well as to support and promote interfaith dialogue.

We commend the prominent role of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in keeping fight against anti-Semitism high on the OSCE agenda. ODIHR has been a valuable partner to the participating States in raising awareness about challenges anti-Semitism possess for democracy and freedom across OSCE area. We also commend the ODIHRs tireless efforts in promoting tolerance against Roma in our States.

Mr. Chairperson,

This year, the International Holocaust Remembrance Day will be marked in (the Republic of) Serbia by a state commemoration ceremony on 27 January. The central ceremony, organized by the relevant Ministry will take place at the monument to the victims of genocide in the Second World War, in the complex of the former death camp "Staro sajmište" in Belgrade.

We attach great importance to preserving the memory of the Holocaust, preventing anti-Semitic violence and hate crimes. At the same time, promoting remembrance and education are of crucial importance, including combating intolerance against Roma.

In the near future, we are planning to sign the Memorandum of Understanding between Republic of Serbia and Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights on the realization of the projects for development of educational materials in Serbian language, on the topic of fight against anti-Semitism.

As a signatory of Teresin Declaration, we committed ourselves to accomplish the restitution of property that belonged to the victims of Holocaust and the relevant legislation is currently in the process of adoption in the Parliament.

Combating all types of extremism and intolerance, Mr. Chairperson, is our legacy to future generations. Our first target group should be young generation, starting from school days. Remembering Holocaust is of particular importance in this regard, which is why we have introduced a Handbook about teaching on Holocaust for school teachers.

Finally, we would like to thank our guests and wish them all the best in their future endeavors.