



Delegation of the State of Israel

STATEMENT BY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

AMBASSADOR AVIV SHIR-ON

AT THE 899TH PERMANENT COUNCIL

26 JANUARY 2012

Thank you Chair.

In commemoration of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day marking the 67th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp, Israel wishes to thank the OSCE Participating States for their commitment to "promote remembrance of, and, as appropriate, education about the tragedy of the Holocaust" in accordance with OSCE Ministerial Council Decision Number 12/04, and acknowledges with much appreciation the diligent work undertaken by ODIHR and the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research in the preparation of an updated version of the document "Holocaust Memorial Day in the OSCE Region – An Overview of Good Governmental Practices".

We also wish to note the important work being carried out by the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson in Office, on Combating Anti-Semitism, Rabbi Andrew Baker. Anti-Semitism continues to permeate the very depths of our societies and Israel is grateful to the shared efforts by the OSCE to fight the manifestations of Anti-Semitism in all its forms, and note the importance of the Berlin Declaration as a milestone in the fight against Anti-Semitism which paved the way and extolled the mass murder of European Jewry only 67 years ago.

Today we honor the memory of the 6 million Jews and many other victims of the Holocaust – the Shoah – but remembering is not enough. It is only by teaching the lessons of the Holocaust can we hope to ensure the security and dignity of all people. It is left to us to remain ever vigilant and vigorous in our efforts to stem the tide of hatred, discrimination and bigotry.

The work of the OSCE and its executive structures to raise awareness of the Holocaust becomes increasingly important and relevant with each passing decade. As the number of survivors of the death camps, forests, and killing fields of Europe dwindles, we, the international community, must bear witness to what occurred during one of the most horrific periods in human history.

On January 27th, 1945, the world was shocked by what it had discovered in Auschwitz, namely the genocide of 6 million Jews. Today, we are the collective voice of these 6 million and many other victims who perished in the Nazi Holocaust. Israel commends and remains committed to the efforts of the OSCE in its pursuit of peaceful dialogue among nations and its promotion of human rights, pluralism, and tolerance.

While we commemorate this day, there are those who seek to deny that such thing ever happened or the magnitude of hatred, cruelty, and the unfathomable slaughter that took place during the Holocaust. How we face the historical truths of the Shoah and its legacy will define us as peoples, states, and will define the moral boundaries of our humanity.

On the occasion of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, and in commemoration of the centennial of the birth of the Swedish diplomat, Raoul Wallenberg, Israel pays special tribute to those men and women whose humanity and moral values came as a ray of light in the dark, and whose civil courage in the face of apathy and passivity brought hope to so many. More than 22,000 Gentiles have been recognized as "Righteous Among the Nations" for risking their lives, and those of their families, to save Jewish people from Nazi persecution. 18 of those recognized were diplomats, whose actions saved the lives of tens of thousands of Jews.

In Jewish tradition it is said that he who saves the life of one person it is as though he saved an entire world. To them, the Righteous Among the Nations, who saved so many worlds and preserved the human conscience Israel remains eternally grateful. We should all be.

Thank you.