

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me first express my gratitude for being invited to this forum. The thoughts I'd like to share with you might include some challenges to the general perception of the problem we confront and to which you address your remarkable efforts.

I will say a few words about the character of anti-Semitism with respect to its difference to other forms of prejudice, such as xenophobia or racism.

To begin with we should also distinguish between different forms of anti-Semitism, which we have to confront in the OSCE Region, in Germany, Eastern Europe and Western Europe. By understanding the different shades of anti-Semitism we can better address the most urgent problems regarding newer and more threatening forms of it. And I will conclude with a few recommendations on a principle level and in the field of education.

1. It is quite common, unfortunately, to mix up anti-Semitism with other forms of prejudice. Anti-Semitism manifests a unique pattern of conspiracy theories, projecting fears and anxieties onto a distorted image of a protean, all powerful foe, explaining the world, and fostering identity. It provides, and that makes it attractive, the possibility to concentrate simultaneously on an imaginary enemy, and a symbolic antagonist that allegedly threatens the well-being of the whole world. This world view bestows upon a community (whether that community is religious or political, a nation or an ethnic group) a certain noble claim to the so called true nature of world conflicts, competing with others to establish legitimacy for their own hegemony and dominance. As you will see this difference has a strong and dangerous impact on our task.

2. The different forms of anti-Semitic patterns in the identity politics of Europe have shown that anti-Semitism has different functions in different national political discourses, for different elites and marginal groups alike.

If we first look at the German scene, we have to realize, that the most serious threat of anti-Semitism does not only come from marginal and radical right wing extremists. Their violent acts indeed get directed mostly against immigrants, asylum seekers and so called "strangers". German anti-Semitism also (in a somewhat more distinguished form) comes from the center of the society, and from the center of the political spectrum. It was a liberal center party leader, who could campaign for the parliament elections with anti-Semitic slogans, under the camouflage of criticizing Israeli government, by blaming German Jews for their ills. One of the most acclaimed writers of Germany, Martin Walser, published a bestselling novel with a plot and a language relying on numerous anti-Semitic stereotypes. But still there is something even more disturbing in Germany. Martin Walser excused his novel, by claiming that it is not anti-Semitic but the expression of an "unhappy love". This is a telling argument. Germany has a long tradition of both philo-semitism and anti-Semitism since the early 19th century. In 1850 Heinrich Laube, one

of the most acclaimed scholars of literature and a German revolutionary, expressed this ambivalent attitude: “Either we must be barbarians and expel the Jews to the last man, or we must digest them”. For Germans Jews have served as a kind of a mirror image for both German aspirations and German fears. This schizophrenic attitude toward Jews formed the bedrock for violent and radical German anti-Semitism that could ultimately motivate the Holocaust. Auschwitz became a central point of reference for German identity politics. And Jews remained an abstract symbol. Today young Germans learn quite a bit about the destruction of German and European Jewry but almost nothing about the fast growing community of about 100.000 Jews who live actually among them – most of them coming as immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

3. If we look at the Eastern European discourse, apart from the former Soviet-Union and maybe Hungary, we recognize the phenomenon of anti-Semitism without Jews. In countries like Poland or Slovakia, the Baltic states or Romania, anti-Semitism becomes again and again a political tool for certain political elites, arouse patriotism and national self-expression in a post-communist setting. These elites play upon traditional anti-Jewish prejudices, deeply rooted in major parts of the populations. Anti-Jewish patterns, which come to the fore, the more the history of these countries does not any longer provide a plain image of occupied victims of the great powers, but as a much more complex history of collaboration and ethnic violence.

4. But as I alluded to in the beginning: the most serious threat of anti-Semitism in Europe however derives from the conflicts and discontent emerging in the framework of a post-colonial and globalized world.

Anti-Semitism has made inroads into the political orientations and cultural patterns of immigrant communities in Europe: Most visibly in France and its huge post-colonial immigrant communities from the Maghreb. But as well in Great Britain and its immigrant communities from Asia, and to some extent in Spain or Italy, and also in Germany.

The communities, national entities and religious orientations among which we today experience the most vivid and violent anti-Jewish prejudices are composed of people who themselves are fighting for recognition, who are victims of xenophobia, racist hatred, ethnic struggle and in their homelands undemocratic regimes. Anti-Jewish ideologies are a valve to express discontent with the process of globalization, with the very real discrimination they face in Europe, and with the perceived disadvantages with regard to markets, technologies and political development. Anti-Jewish ideologies are attractive because they portray the world as a conspiracy, in which the own culture is despised and discriminated, self-fulfilling a process of isolation and violent disintegration. We see the emergence of anti-Semitism in parts of the radical left too, as an attractive conspiracy theory, giving simple answers to the political dynamics and social injustice of globalization.

While there is a certain tendency to interpret this new anti-Jewish ideology as an “Islamic anti-Semitism”, I would sharply oppose that view. It does not only simplify the problem, but it regenerates an ideological notion of “culture”, which indeed is a very European and a very German phenomenon in particular that drives the very problems we face.

5. Europe as a whole has become more of an immigration society, how much this is publicly acknowledged or not. And taken into account the given demographical and economic data this is a process of no return. Germany plays in this process certainly a particularly ambivalent role. Germany filled its labor market traditionally with immigrants from Eastern Europe, and only after 1945 this changed substantially. Today more than 3.000.000 Muslims live in Germany and a growing part of them apply for German citizenship. As most of them come from Turkey, anti-Semitic prejudices are not as much wide-spread among these immigrants than in the Maghreb based communities in France. This is due to the specific relation between Turkey and the Middle East, and to Israel. (And interestingly enough this is taken on the other side by many Greeks as a rationale for own anti-Semitism.)

But still, Germany increasingly has to confront similar problems like Western Europe. The discussion in Germany about the definition of Europe arrives, as it seems, at a decisive moment. Again this is a conflict about competing images of Europe. On the one hand we find self-images which either define Europe as a basically homogeneous cultural space, defined by either its Christian-Hellenic heritage, or (and that is not really better): by its Christian-Jewish history, centered around Auschwitz, which some misuse as an excuse for a new exclusive ideology to legitimate culturally defined borders. Or on the other hand: to accept Europe as a political entity with a constitutional framework, which invites in principle the whole OSCE Region under its umbrella. And that indeed means not only to accept Judaism but also Islam as an integral part of the European Heritage and future.

6. To conclude with a few recommendations in principle and in detail:

- I don't think that Europe can exist as a fortress, defined by the idea of a clash (or even the dialogue) of cultures, even if relevant parts of the elites in Germany and in other European countries seem to entertain such a world view.

The fact that in Turkey a difficult process of reconciliation between the invented national tradition of the 20th century and the Islamic heritage of this country has begun is a necessary prerequisite for the integration into the European Community, which should be encouraged and not slowed down. This also means that the legislation of European countries should establish legal structures (regarding education, tax collection, public funds etc.) for Europeans of Islamic faith comparable to those that Christians and Jews already have. And we are indeed far away from this. I know that it is not the task of this forum to discuss political plans on that level. But

there will be no efficient strategy to combat anti-Semitism without political initiatives to counter discrimination and to open the European theatre towards the Middle East and also to Northern Africa.

- To fight anti-Semitism in Europe in the realms of education requires first of all the will to acknowledge the situation of the immigrant communities, second the will to spend substantial funds into research in this field, research which right now is absolutely marginal. This lack of attention substantially reduces the value of expertise, provided by recent studies undertaken to explore patterns of prejudice and political attitudes.

- This research should in fact should lead to educational activities, which take serious the specific situation in different European countries, which do not try to play over the significant differences in the historical contexts of the respective countries and there different composition regarding immigrants and traditional minorities.