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Introduction

At the outset, let me express my appreciation to the Chair of the Commission, Representative Chris Smith, and to the Co-Chair of the Commission, Senator Ben Cardin. Your long-standing attention to the problem of anti-Semitism has been unswerving and your leadership has been central to marshaling efforts to combat it both in the US and abroad. We thank you.

A decade ago in the immediate aftermath of the ill-fated UN Conference in Durban, we sought effective means to alert the public to the resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe, which included a dramatic increase in attacks on Jewish targets, frequently triggered by events in the Middle East. We also witnessed the beginnings of what would become a new problem of anti-Semitism in public discourse.

And we turned to you.

It was this Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe that pushed and prodded a reluctant diplomatic bureaucracy here in Washington to press the OSCE to take up the problem. And much to the surprise of some those skeptics, a first OSCE conference on anti-Semitism took place in Vienna in 2003, which led in turn to the seminal high level conference and declaration on anti-Semitism in Berlin in 2004. It included a commitment by governments to monitor and collect data on anti-Semitic and other hate crimes, to promote Holocaust education and effective legislation. It was followed by the establishment of a department on tolerance and non-discrimination in ODIHR and further conferences and expert meetings including the March conference in Prague this year focused on anti-Semitism in public discourse.

These efforts also included the appointment of a special envoy at the OSCE, a Personal Representative of the Chair-in-Office on Combating Anti-Semitism, a position which I now hold.

My message to you today is a simple one: The problem remains and we still need your help.

Anti-Semitism in Public Discourse

The Prague Conference on anti-Semitism in public discourse was itself recognition of one of the most difficult current challenges we face. Opinion surveys in many European states reveal anti-Jewish sentiments are still held by significant numbers of the population. These percentages may fluctuate over time and are certainly not uniform from country to country. But the overall picture remains a distressing one, and it has direct and immediate consequences for Jewish communities.

The Jewish population in OSCE participating states ranges from a high of two percent (in the United States) to fractions so small they barely register. And yet the presence of Jews is not the determining factor in the presence of anti-Semitism. For the most part popular attitudes toward Jews are not formed from personal encounters, which are rare, but rather from the images and rhetoric of public discourse—in mainstream media, in political debate and on the Internet. Conspiracy theories of Jewish world domination and economic prowess are no less evident today than they were a century ago. But a new phenomenon has been the identification of the State of Israel as a source for anti-Jewish prejudice. Frequently Jews and Israel are conflated, and those harboring antagonistic views of Israel ascribe the same attributes to Jews and local Jewish communities. The OSCE recognized this phenomenon in 2004, in its Berlin Declaration, which, “declare[d] unambiguously that international developments or political issues, including those in Israel or elsewhere in the Middle East never justify anti-Semitism”

While governments still fall short in monitoring and reporting physical incidents of anti-Semitism, fewer still have any systematic process of monitoring and recording let alone responding to incidents on the Internet or in the media. Governments can and should do much more, and in the interim practical steps can be taken to help civil society groups develop the capacity to do their own monitoring.

Because of constitutional protections, the United States especially recognizes that ways must be found to address this growing problem without constraining freedom of speech and the press. The laws in European states vary, with some countries having the ability to prosecute and punish hate speech. Such laws may serve to articulate an important societal value, but even this can be undercut when the prosecution is arbitrary or infrequent or when punishment is minimal or long-delayed. Participants in Prague stressed the importance of political and community leaders responding loudly and swiftly as a way of fostering a taboo culture when it comes to anti-Semitism.

Holocaust Education

Holocaust education has long been identified as an important contribution to combating anti-Semitism, and it is among the commitments that Participating States made at the OSCE Berlin Conference in 2004. We should bear in mind that even where the subject is included in the secondary school curriculum, that still may mean only a day or less over

the course of the school year. There are also special challenges when teaching the subject. Some students from immigrant Arab and Muslim communities have voiced resentment or sought to bring the Middle East conflict into the discussion, which draws attention away from the subject itself and subverts its intention. Some governments have recognized this problem and sought ways to address it. One notable example is a project in the Netherlands that teams young Jewish and Arab peer teachers to present the subject in public school classrooms with a particular focus on vocational school students. In Germany the House of the Wanssee Conference has developed special teaching materials aimed at students of Turkish descent.

There are increasing calls to apply a “human rights focus” to Holocaust education, which in the process of drawing universal lessons may lose sight of the important particular one: This is where prejudice against Jews can lead. Recent efforts in some Eastern European countries to focus attention on the legacy of Communist oppression and to seek support for education and remembrance efforts have also caused confusion. Although a worthy endeavor in its own right, some proponents draw false equivalencies to the Holocaust.

Muslim-Jewish Relations

When the European Monitoring Centre (EUMC) conducted its survey on anti-Semitism in European Union countries in 2004, it learned that a new and growing source of anti-Semitic incidents could be traced to Arab and Muslim communities. This remains a matter of concern and is still reflected in the available data. In some cities or in some neighborhoods visibly identifiable Jews—i.e., those in Orthodox garb or wearing Jewish symbols—may be fearful of physical or verbal attack when they are on the streets. Enhanced security measures and more rapid and serious responses to complaints provide some relief to these problems. Some communities have helped foster Muslim-Jewish dialogues and cooperative projects. Although the actual numbers of individuals who participate in such activities may be small, they are symbolically important, and positive media coverage can help amplify their reach.

More and more countries are developing educational programs to promote tolerance and combat racism and xenophobia. By and large such efforts are commendable and reflect the goals established by the OSCE and ODIHR. But in conversations with European Jewish leaders there are also some warnings. Such general programs do not necessarily address the problems of anti-Semitism stemming from individuals who themselves may also be the victims of racism.

Demonization of Israel

It has become almost commonplace to find mainstream media coverage of the Middle East conflict particularly in Western Europe demonizing the State of Israel. It is manifest

in news, in cartoons and in commentary. Some observers have described this as a new form of anti-Semitism, but it also contributes to prejudice against Jews who are seen as Israel's friends, supporters or surrogates. We also see that the term "Zionist" is increasingly used in a pejorative way and frequently substitutes for "Jew" in written or oral discourse. This may at first appear to be accidental or just reflecting the growing tendency of conflating Jews and Israel in public rhetoric, while demeaning an honorable movement. But there may be more to it. French law, for example, has legal provisions for prosecuting certain hate speech directed at particular nationalities or ethnic groups. Thus, a verbal attack on "Jews" or a call to boycott "Israelis" could land someone in jail, but not so if the targets are "Zionists" which makes finding a solution to such changes in terminology particularly important.

In 2005 the EUMC adopted a "working definition" of anti-Semitism, which offered examples of how anti-Semitism can manifest itself with regard to the State of Israel. It was endorsed by Parliamentary Conferences in London and Ottawa. The State Department Special Envoy has adopted it for her work and analysis. I share it and recommend its use when I travel in my OSCE capacity. But it still meets with some opposition including from the EUMC successor agency, and thus bears repeating wherever possible.

Security

Despite their small numbers, European Jewish communities have shouldered an outsized burden in providing security for their members and their institutions. From the 1970s some have been—and remain—the targets of international terrorism. The corrosive impact of increased anti-Semitic rhetoric in more recent years has meant that synagogues, religious schools, community centers and cemeteries face physical attacks ranging from graffiti to arson. Community leaders in turn must decide how much of their limited resources can be diverted from educational and religious needs to provide for their own protection. At its essence it restricts the Jewish community's ability to exercise the full freedom of religious practice, a bedrock principle of the OSCE.

Governments approach this problem differently. Some have accepted the responsibility to assist, while others have not. During my country visit to Sweden in 2010 this problem was identified as a priority issue by the Jewish Community of Stockholm which was spending a quarter of its overall budget on security. In recent months the Swedish government has come forward with financial grants to assist the Jewish community to meet these security needs. It should be commended for this action, and I hope it will serve as a model for other states to follow.

The Banning of Ritual Slaughter

A growing number of countries have adopted laws which require the stunning of animals before they are slaughtered, thus effectively banning ritual (kosher) slaughter.

Jewish communities have adapted by importing kosher meat. But discussions of this topic during OSCE visits this year to the Netherlands (where a law is pending) and in Switzerland (where a ban was imposed over a century ago) reveal a more troubling situation. The Dutch legislation is spearheaded by animal rights advocates and has received support from nationalist MPs who may believe—mistakenly as it turns out—that this law would also prohibit *halal* meat. Meanwhile, Dutch Jewish leaders are cautious in marshaling arguments in opposition. They are reluctant to assert the basic principles of religious freedom, which they believe would not have popular appeal. Instead they look to expert testimony that maintains there is no conclusive scientific evidence proving one method is more humane than the other.

In Switzerland even government officials acknowledge that their law banning kosher slaughter, coming as it did in the wake of the Dreyfus trial in the 1890s, was anti-Semitic by intent. They say it is likely that an appeal to Swiss courts to overturn the law as a violation of religious freedom would succeed. But successive Jewish community leaders have decided not to do so. They long ago accommodated themselves to the ban with imported meat from France and believe that challenging it could generate an anti-Semitic backlash. Better then, to keep a low profile. This is understandable, but surely an outdated prescription for averting anti-Semitism.

Role of the OSCE and the Helsinki Commission

When the OSCE Permanent Council agreed to support a conference on anti-Semitism in June 2003, I am sure that some members imagined that this would be one event, one time and then attention could turn elsewhere. We remember how international declarations would frequently condemn a long litany of evils—“racism, xenophobia, prejudice, intolerance, racial discrimination, etc., etc.”—without ever actually uttering the word “anti-Semitism.” (It led one friend, a long-time senior staff member at the Council of Europe and a child survivor of the Holocaust to quip, “Anti-Semitism is always left to the “et ceteras.”)

There has been significant progress in focusing the OSCE to address the problem of anti-Semitism and in educating people to its unique manifestations and its stubborn persistence. Monitors have generally recorded a decline in anti-Semitic incidents since early 2009, but we are still far, far higher than the baselines of previous years. We also know that turmoil in the Middle East could again trigger a new wave of incidents. And it is still far from clear what repercussions there might be if Europe’s economic crisis still worsens.

The U.S. and the Helsinki Commission have been the primary driving force to keep the OSCE focused on the problem of anti-Semitism, a necessary and constant reminder that it is still with us and that it can always again turn deadly.

When Secretary of State Clinton and the U.S. Delegation take their seats at the OSCE Ministerial Meeting in Vilnius next week, I very much hope they will include this message in their remarks.

Ambassador Stephan Minikes

In closing let me also pay respects to Ambassador Steve Minikes who died earlier this autumn. He was the U.S. Ambassador to the OSCE during the critical period when we witnessed the resurgence in anti-Semitism in 2002. It was in significant measure due to his personal efforts that there was that first conference on anti-Semitism in 2003 and the following meetings in Berlin and Cordova, along with the various other measures that were adopted. Those of you here who worked with him knew of his dedication. I still vividly recall one evening at his residence in Vienna early on in this process when he showed me a postcard sent to him by his grandmother sixty years ago. It was a brief note written in pencil telling her grandson that everything was fine. But the postmark belied the message. It was sent from Therezienstadt, and only a short time afterward she was deported to Auschwitz. I understood then why this effort was personal and not just one concern among many in an ambassador's portfolio. We have all benefited as a result, and he will be missed.