VICE PRESIDENT

MINISTERIAL MEETING: INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE ALLIANCE

Residence Palace International Press Centre, 19 January 2020, Brussels

Speech

The Shoah did not start in gas chambers, it started with thoughts and words, dehumanizing the Jewish people after centuries of pogroms and persecution. This truth is challenged today from many sides and thus the work and commitment of the IHRA is evermore important.

Our duty is to pass on the knowledge about the Holocaust to the next generation and to stand shoulder to shoulder with Jewish communities, as they feel again threatened across the continent.

As an expression of the EU's determination, the three Presidents of the Commission, Council and Parliament will participate later this week in Jerusalem in the ceremony commemorating the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

Rising antisemitism across Europe and worldwide leaves no room for complacency. Ten days after hear appointment, President von der Leyen the Commission's reiterated that "a rising challenge needs a stronger response from our side".

For 9 out of 10 Jewish Europeans, antisemitism is their number one problem. Antisemitism comes in many forms, ranging from Antizionism, to Holocaust denial and distortion.

For this reason, we endorsed the IHRA working definition already in January 2017, before even acquiring Permanent International Partner status in 2018. We believe it should be used by all Member States in training for law enforcement agents and educators.

In the Council Declaration on antisemitism, unanimously adopted in 2018, EU Member States committed to adopting national strategies on combating antisemitism in the context of their general strategies against racism.

The situation for the Jewish communities locally will only improve if member states adopt such strategies swiftly and act firmly. We look forward to seeing first strategies adopted under the German IHRA Presidency coinciding with the Presidency of the EU in the 2nd half of 2020.

Our ultimate aim must be to allow Jewish life and culture to thrive in our societies.