



Romanian  
Chairmanship  
2016

## **International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance**

### **Handover ceremony**

Berlin, 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2016

### *Speaking notes for the Chair*

*Your Excellences',  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Dear guests,*

Romania has the honour to take over the Chairmanship of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) from Hungary, and is ready to further contribute to keeping the topic of Holocaust remembrance in the attention of all stakeholders, especially in Central Europe. I would like to take this opportunity and thank the Hungarian Chair - Ambassador Szabolcs Takács - and his entire team for their efforts throughout the past year.

Romania's decision to assume the Chairmanship was motivated by our own record in drawing the lessons from a tragic moment in our national past, as well as by a genuine commitment to the consolidation of the IHRA mandate.

We are determined to place combating antisemitism and Holocaust denial at the core of our Chairmanship in 2016. We believe that programs and projects aimed at combating antisemitism should be at the frontline of each IHRA member and observer state's actions. We feel it is a special duty to place the threats posed by antisemitism high on IHRA's agenda and to do our best to also encourage other international organizations to more resolutely address this challenge.

It is in this context that we welcome the appointment of a European Commission Coordinator on combating antisemitism, and I do hope to have the chance to meet Mrs. Katharina von Schnurbein very soon in order to address these and other related topics.

During the Romanian Chairmanship, an evaluation of IHRA's mission and activities is underway. We will lend all of our support to each stage of this assessment, together with the Permanent Secretariat of IHRA. At the end of this process we hope to have a clearer view on the achievements of the organization and on any reforms needed. IHRA's action needs predictability and through this evaluation process we should be able to address a number of preoccupations regarding efficiency, effectiveness, added value, sustainability, coordination and coherence.

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

Allow me to guide you through the priorities of the Romanian Chairmanship this year.

### **Priorities of the Romanian Chairmanship**

The Romanian Chairmanship will have **3 main priorities**:

- Work with the media and social media

In an era when communication is so fast, raising awareness on topics such as education and research on the Holocaust and its remembrance should involve as many and as diverse civic contributors as possible: academia, NGOs, youth groups, bloggers, media, trendsetters/opinion

makers, politicians. Media and social media exposure of the IHRA is an efficient way of carrying out outreach and thus contributing to a better understanding of the IHRA's mission.

We intend to organize a flagship event – a thematic conference on combating antisemitism, Holocaust denial, extremism and racism in the media and social media, and to address various perspectives of media coverage and social media content on these issues.

- Consolidation of education on the Holocaust in member countries and beyond

Education on the Holocaust is one of IHRA's traditional lines of action and we commend the activity of the Education Working Group. The Romanian Chairmanship will work closely with this Working Group experts to persuade member states to further promote IHRA-based and national projects on education about the Holocaust, and to expand such activities in cooperation with observer countries and other partners.

Consolidating education on the Holocaust in Romania is a priority and a challenge for this Chairmanship. Our expectation is that beyond 2016, not only in Romania, but in the wider Central and South East Europe region, we should be able to have a better understanding of *how to teach about the Holocaust* at graduate and undergraduate levels.

A special focus will be given to the most effective programs and actions meant to properly enforce the legislations on preventing and combating antisemitism, extremism, racism and xenophobia. By sharing in the most advanced initiatives of the member states and by launching dedicated pilot-trainings we hope to more convincingly and effectively promote this mission in the IHRA community and beyond

- Promotion of academic research

Under this pillar, one of our main areas of interest will be promoting archival access – a topic of great concern among IHRA member countries – and achieving progress on addressing problems raised by data protection policies. We will continue to build on the 2015 Chairmanship achievements, particularly the inclusion of a specific reference to the Holocaust in the *EU General Data Protection Regulation*.

The topic of the genocide of the Roma will also be given special attention. We need to improve the framework of dialogue with NGOs and specialized institutions, so as to address in a deeper and more comprehensive manner the tragedy of the genocide of the Roma and to include it more visibly in educational programs. For this, we plan to work close together with the relevant agencies in Romania as well as with the IHRA's Permanent International Partners.

*Dear guests,*

We hope the Romanian Chairmanship will also prove effective in IHRA's outreach activities, in relation to our partners of cooperation. There are encouraging prospects.

The presence of the IHRA in the Republic of Moldova is becoming increasingly consolidated and we commend their decision to establish the date of 27<sup>th</sup> of January as Holocaust Memorial Day. We could further build on the success of *the IHRA professional development outreach program* that ran in September 2015 in this country.

We will do our best to strengthen the cooperation of the IHRA with Ukraine, building on the work of the previous Chairs and making use of the neighbourly relations that Romania and Ukraine share. Similar efforts will be dedicated to promoting IHRA's mission and values in relation with partners in South Eastern Europe.

Another important aspect is continuing the cooperation with the Vatican, and we hope that the IHRA will soon be able to reap the fruits of the efforts deployed by the British Chairmanship along this line.

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

Last, but not least, allow me to state how honoured and privileged we are to benefit from the wisdom of professor Yehuda Bauer, who will be 90 years old this year. His immense legacy dedicated to the IHRA is an abiding encouragement and inspiration to all of us.

I express Romania's commitment to reconfirming the merits derived from the principles of the Stockholm Declaration and to ensuring their rigorous observance in all activities during our IHRA Chairmanship.

Ambassador Mihnea Constantinescu, Romanian Chair