



International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

International Holocaust Remembrance Day in Albania

27 January 2017

Address by Ambassador Michael Baier

Distinguished participants,

I would like to begin by saying what a pleasure it is for me to be able to address you today on this important day of commemoration.

Today I have the honour of representing the Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, Ambassador Mihnea Constantinescu.

I would like to take a moment to explain the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance for those of you who do not know the organization well.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, or IHRA, unites governments and experts to shape and advance Holocaust education, remembrance and research world-wide, to speak out on Holocaust related issues including antisemitism, and to uphold the commitments of the 2000 Stockholm Declaration.

In simple terms, twice a year we bring together around 250 leading experts and policy-makers from more than 40 countries to discuss key Holocaust-related issues. Experts can share best practices with each other, undertake international projects together and, crucially, feed recommendations and concerns directly to the political level of this international body.

While education about the Holocaust has and needs a national framework and focus, appropriate, well-reflected Holocaust education needs international input and exchange.

Indeed it was the need to build an international framework for Holocaust education that primarily motivated the foundation of the IHRA. The inception of the organization finds itself in the schools of Sweden in the year 1997, when Swedish Prime Minister Goeran Persson was concerned by a poll conducted among high school children in his country, which seemed to show a lessened commitment to democratic values and a lack of knowledge about the Second World War.

Education has always been considered essential in the fight against genocide and crimes against humanity, so this poll was an indication that education about the Holocaust was failing to meet its target.

In light of this, Persson decided to bring together the representatives of 46 states with scholars, educators and survivors in Stockholm in the year 2000 to discuss the issue.

On that day, speaking before world leaders, educators, curators, and survivors, Persson said:

“It happened once. It should not have happened, but it did. It must not happen again, but it could. That is why education about the Holocaust is fundamental.”

The outcome of that meeting was the Stockholm Declaration I mentioned before and the formation of the unique 31 country network which exists today as the IHRA.

The existence of the IHRA and the commitment of its Member Countries to promote Holocaust education, remembrance and research should honour the memory of those who were murdered and those who survived.

Thus the importance of the IHRA is that, through the Stockholm Declaration it commits *governments* to promoting education about the Holocaust in schools and universities. Because after all, it is governments who are responsible for the broad education of the general public.

For this reason it is such an important sign that this national commemoration for International Holocaust Remembrance Day is being held.

Because it should be clear that the Holocaust is a contemporary *political* issue.

And such political issues requires an international approach.

In addition to this 41 country network, we also stand together with a number of international organizations, including the United Nations and the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency who we released a joint statement with yesterday.

In times like the present it seems indispensable that Holocaust issues be addressed in the context of pursuing goals as preventing genocide and other mass atrocities as well as combating antisemitism, xenophobia and other phenomena bearing the potential of hate crimes.

The Holocaust is and remains an issue of contemporary educational and political importance and it is IHRA's role to keep Holocaust education firmly on the international political agenda.

We thank Albania for being part of that effort.