



Romanian
Chairmanship
2016

**The Speech of the Romanian IHRA Chair, Ambassador Mihnea Cosatntinescu, at the event organised in
Romania for the memory of Elie Wiesel
Choral Temple, Bucharest, July 7th 2016**

For the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, Elie Wisel is a high valued personality and in many ways he is the expression of the unaltered conscience of this world.

His calls towards the future generations in never forgetting about the Holocaust have become the *silver thread* for the joint commitment of the world democracies in making everything possible for such a tragedy never to be repeated.

As a writer, activist, philosopher and teacher he was one of those people that could change the world without having institutions, functions or power.

He was not only one of the notorious Holocaust survivors, but rather an *alive memorial*, living at each second the memory of what should never be repeated again.

In 2000 Elie Wiesel was the honorific Chairman of the first International Forum on the Holocaust, in Stockholm, a mechanism that preceded the *International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance* - IHRA.

Nowadays IHRA, which is chaired by Romania in 2016, is a frontrunner player at international level in striving to have the memory, the respect for the victims of the Holocaust, the deepening of the Holocaust research and the understanding of the roots and consequences of this horrendous tragedy as parts of the contemporary action and education.

For Romania, Elie Wiesel had an essential role in deeply changing our perspective in acknowledging national history, including the dark episodes such as participating in the Holocaust.

The fact that Romania today committed itself to chair the activities of IHRA is based on the credibility obtained after assuming the recommendations of the Elie Wiesel Report in 2004. I can only be grateful and commend the wisdom, the political courage and the merit of all those that at that time assumed such an inspiring action.

To keep the same line of action, we need to be honest with ourselves and act in a manner that tragedies such as Iasi and Dorohoi Pogroms, the Transnistrian Deportations, Bucharest Pogrom, the ghettos in the Northern Transylvania do not remain simple topics of historical research or academic considerations.

They need to be brought to the attention of a wider public, as part of a national responsible policy, able to defend us against temptations such as ignorance and denial. Only those who have not seen in Iasi, Podu Iloaiei, Targu Frumos, Popricani and Sabaoani the long, cold and sinister form of the mass graves cannot fully understand the imperative of fighting such temptations.

That is why today's commemoration is an opportunity to make a promise to ourselves that we will be tireless in combating this age-old demon, anti-Semitism and intolerance, which will probably continue to last, making sure it will not infest the mind and the soul of young people as well as the life and progress of our society.

That is why we should not stop in telling the young people the truth about our history so that the young people cannot loose courage in front of the history. Let's not ever become fearful bystanders, indifferent towards sufferings and without adequate reaction towards hatred, bigotry, intolerance or abuse.

I am deeply convinced that today, in every place in this world, the greatest threat of all for the democratic progress of our society is **indifference**. Absolutely nothing can justify irresponsibility and indifference when they are detrimental to the dignity and the lives of our peers.

Remembering the tragedy of the Holocaust, we ask ourselves what could be more hideous than finding anti-Semitic views mixed among far-right extremist or denial messages in the public space, in the media and social media.

That is why I am convinced that our active involvement in exposing and combating all forms of extremism, intolerance, anti-Semitism, xenophobia is today a responsibility that belongs to society as a whole.

This is the legacy that is transmitted, for each generation, by the tirelessly and lively spirit of the Elie Wiesel's recommendations.

May his memory be blessed and his soul to find his eternal peace!