

Speech for meeting with PACE Committee, Stockholm 11 May 2022,

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

- It is an honour to meet and address you and to take part in this important gathering.
- I have the responsibility of being the Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, IHRA, during the Swedish Presidency of the Organization - a Presidency that started on the 1st of March this year and will last until the 28th of February next year.
- The Swedish Presidency builds on a long series of efforts and aims at taking them further, together with both members and partners of the IHRA.
- Some of the previous efforts, for Sweden's part, have included initiating the Task Force that later became the IHRA. As part of this work, Sweden has held a series of intergovernmental conferences which started with the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust in 2000 where world leaders adopted the IHRA's founding document, the "Stockholm Declaration on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research".
- This conference was followed by three more focusing on "Combating Intolerance", on "Truth, Justice and Reconciliation" and on "Genocide Prevention".
- These gatherings helped strengthen the political resolve to ensure that every new generation can learn about the Holocaust and reflect upon its consequences.
- Since then, the IHRA, its partners - and the international community as a whole - have continued to step up work to enhance knowledge in this field and to warn of the dangers of antisemitism, racism and prejudice.
- Despite these efforts it is, sadly enough, all too easy to draw parallels with the past when we look at the world of today and witness hate speech and distortion displaying antisemitism, antigypsyism, racism and intolerance – both online and offline.

- These trends further underline the importance of the IHRA since it is an extraordinary organization working on these exact issues and joining 35 member countries behind a strong and clear mandate: To unite Governments and experts in strengthening, advancing and promoting Holocaust education, remembrance and research worldwide.
- To further promote work in these and related areas, the former Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven, organized the Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism, Remember – ReAct in October last year.
- The Forum illustrated what I just mentioned – namely that we live in a time of many challenges. But, it also indicated that there are also - almost endless – possibilities. And in that vein, 60 delegations made pledges on how to take their work forward, and - by doing so – they also provided hope and inspiration for even more actors.
- Many of the pledges are concrete, illustrating important commitments by both IHRA members and others to – for example – focus on special measures to enhance education, foster remembrance and protect individuals from violence, discrimination and expressions of hostility.
- But promises and pledges aren't enough. As the former Swedish Prime Minister, Stefan Löfven, said in Malmö “The real work starts now. It's now that our pledges must be turned into action”.
- To encourage and facilitate this, Sweden has promised to follow up on the pledges as part of our Presidency of the IHRA. In line with this, the motto of our Presidency is to work “Together for Impact”, Promoting Holocaust remembrance and combating antisemitism and antigypsyism through cooperation and dialogue.
- Under this motto, the Swedish Presidency is focussing on two main priorities:
- **1. Enhancing the impact of the IHRA and its work.** Here, the Presidency will encourage, give visibility to and enable dialogue on the implementation of the pledges made at the Malmö Forum, in order to help pave the way for positive and sustainable change. As part of this, the

Presidency will present a follow-up report on the implementation of the pledges toward the end of the year 2022.

- **2. Strengthening the IHRA as an institution.** As part of this, more internal track, the Presidency will assist the IHRA in catching up with its considerable expansion in membership and scope, to ensure that the organisation can remain strong and sustainable for decades to come. The Presidency is, for instance, leading the development of a new financing model for the IHRA.

Esteemed Parliamentarians,

- As you know, and as already mentioned, these efforts are taken forward against a background of growing challenges - and not least in the field that is the focus of our gathering here tonight. Antisemitism.
- We see that antisemitic incidents, narratives and conspiracy theories are on the rise worldwide. Whether online or offline, in classrooms or in workplaces, at carnivals or at demonstrations, the scourge of antisemitism persists, and is inching closer to the mainstream. History has taught us what can happen when antisemitism is normalized.
- The IHRA views this development with deep concern, which is clearly expressed in the organization's Ministerial declaration of 2020, where article 7 states that the IHRA Member countries accept their "responsibility as governments to continue working together to counter Holocaust denial and distortion, antisemitism, and all forms of racism and discrimination that undermine fundamental democratic principles."
- In line with this, the IHRA, the only intergovernmental organization mandated to focus on Holocaust-related issues, is working with governments, experts and civil society organizations to help create a shared understanding of how antisemitism impacts our societies – and how we can address it.
- The IHRA also works closely with its Permanent International Partners to support Holocaust-related work and institutions around the world, and the Council of Europe is – as I'm sure you know – one of these partners.

- In support of its work, the IHRA has a Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial made up of international experts from a variety of fields, who work together throughout the year to address the most pressing issues related to antisemitism. Their research and discussions help inform the policy decisions of the IHRA's Member Countries. The Committee also works to create practical tools to help ensure that policy and decision makers are better equipped to address antisemitism in their societies.
- The Committee is now hard at work in preparing for the discussions that they will hold during the two plenary meetings that Sweden will host during its Presidency and where the first one will be held in Stockholm in just over a month. Some of the themes that the Committee will look at during that meeting is on-line hate and the impact of the pandemic on antisemitic conspiracy narratives.
- In the face of today's challenges, there is only one option: To work even harder. And to do it together.
- I look forward to doing just that during our Presidency, including together with the Council of Europe and the other permanent international partners of the IHRA.
- Thank you for your attention!

