

**Speech by IHRA Chair Ann Bernes at the opening of the Auschwitz
exhibition in Malmö on 24 May 2022**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, colleagues, and friends,

- I am pleased and honoured to address the opening of this exhibition and to have the opportunity to share this very special occasion with you.
- My name is Ann Bernes and I am proud to be here in my capacity as Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) – an organisation where Sweden currently holds the Presidency.
- The IHRA is an extraordinary body joining 35 member countries in promoting and advancing Holocaust education, remembrance and research throughout the world.

- The IHRA was created by the former Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson more than two decades ago, in 1998.
- The initiative was taken in light of a study which showed that Swedish school children didn't know much, if anything, about the Holocaust.
- This made Göran Persson reach out to his colleagues, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and former US President Bill Clinton, so that they could set up a Task Force to promote international cooperation on Holocaust education, remembrance and research.
- Göran Persson himself noted that: "It happened once, it should not have happened, but it did. It must not happen again, but it could."

- To prevent this, strengthen political resolve and ensure that every new generation can learn about the Holocaust, Sweden has held a series of intergovernmental conferences.
- The first one, in 2000, gathered leaders from all over the world and resulted in 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".

- 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 between the past and the world of today as we witness hate speech and intolerance – online and offline.
- These trends underline the importance of this exhibition which helps us to prevent an environment of ignorance, distortion and hatred by letting us learn, reflect and become part of safeguarding the facts.
- It also allows us to visualise history, which is key since history teaches us what can happen when antisemitism and discrimination is accepted and normalized.
- We must never forget the millions of Jews, the Roma and Sinti, the LGBTQI communities, persons with disabilities, and countless others that were killed in concentration camps like Auschwitz, Sobibor, Treblinka.
- We cannot allow the Holocaust from disappearing from the collective memory, and it is becoming more and more important that each and every one of us bears witness, and becomes an educator, since we can't expect survivors and eyewitnesses to shoulder that responsibility for ever.
- For this, every opportunity to make real impact for positive change must be used, and we can all contribute.
- The motto of the Swedish presidency of the IHRA is “Together for Impact” and as part of that approach, we will showcase good examples of action that countries undertake based on the Malmö pledges (that the previous speaker highlighted).
- I encourage you all to follow the IHRA throughout the year as we promote Holocaust remembrance and work together, for impact.
- Thank you for your attention.