

Address by Dr Miro Cerar,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia
IHRA Ministerial Meeting in Brussels, 19 January 2020

Ministers, Chairman, Honorary IHRA Chair,

Today, we are marking the 20th anniversary of the Stockholm Declaration that encouraged a united, international effort to promote Holocaust education, remembrance and research, and remember the victims, survivors and those who resisted, protected or rescued their fellow human beings. This year also marks the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz Birkenau and other death camps. Let me call to mind the centenary of another, less known fact in the European history, namely the burning down of the Slovene National Hall in Trieste/Trst, which was the first display of the criminal nature of fascism in 1920. At the time, Trieste/Trst was a multicultural cosmopolitan city with a significant presence of Slovene population. After the burning of this cultural centre, everything changed. It was an evident sign of the devastating process that led to the horrors of another world war.

Twenty years ago, in 2000 in Stockholm, the former President of Slovenia Milan Kučan said that the democratic world made clear its position to Nazi and fascist aggression in World War II. This position cannot be changed, just as one cannot change the past. What happened to the Jews remains a horror unparalleled in human history.

Slovenia is committed to further safeguarding, researching and educating about the historical record of the Holocaust, the genocide of Roma, and the persecution of other victims, including Slovenes and others living on the then entirely occupied Slovene territory, by Nazis, fascists and other collaborators who participated in these crimes. The understanding of, educating about, and memorizing the nature of these crimes are essential to the prevention of possible mass atrocity crimes in the future.

We are concerned about the noticeable rise in the acceptance of intolerance, xenophobia, racism – including antisemitism – and the use of hate speech and incitement in various parts of the world. The continued threats to our pluralistic, democratic and inclusive societies constitute a threat to all and are a risk factor reminding that no society is immune.

We should all do our utmost to build healthy societies for the future. Slovenia will continue to be an active member of IHRA and a strong supporter of the principle Responsibility to Protect, adopted at the 2005 UN World Summit in order to contribute to the building of resilient societies. Preventive awareness raising and educational activities – such as the yearly project "Shoah-Let Us Remember", the "Festival of Tolerance" – educational activities for children and youth, scientific publications about historical research and commemorative events will continue, in collaboration with numerous partners throughout Slovenia and internationally.

It is most appropriate that – as a symbol of peace – this ministerial meeting is taking place in the capital of the European Union. On behalf of Slovenia, I sincerely thank the hosts, the Permanent Secretariat and the excellent Luxembourg Chairmanship for all its efforts to make IHRA's work efficient and visible.

Thank you.