



1129<sup>th</sup> Permanent Council of the OSCE, 26 January 2017

*Response to the Address by the Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, H.E. Ambassador Mihnea Constantinescu*

## **Statement by Switzerland**

Mr. Chairman,

As we honor the memory of millions of innocent victims of the Holocaust on the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, we need to become aware that more than 70 years later, there are less and less survivors that can speak out about this unprecedented atrocity.

Breaking the silence about the systematic murder and persecution and the suffering endured took a lot of time. Since then, many survivors' memoirs have been published, the following generations have learned about the horrors of the Holocaust. And we commit to do all in our power to prevent a similar tragedy to happen ever again. This is a priority shared by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

Switzerland was admitted into the IHRA in 2004. In a few weeks' time, Switzerland will succeed Romania, and Ambassador Benno Bättig, Secretary-General of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, will become Chairman of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).

In the past months and weeks the Swiss Delegation to the IHRA has had many fruitful and positive meetings and discussions with the outgoing Romanian Presidency. Switzerland is grateful to Chairman Constantinescu for his excellent Chairmanship, and for our close cooperation in the past, and in the year to come.

Education and Remembrance encompass past and present, with future generations in mind, because as time goes by, there will not be any first-hand accounts of the Holocaust anymore. The Swiss government as well as civil society is committed to preserving in Switzerland the memory of the Holocaust and its victims, as it is preserved elsewhere.

The three pillars of the Swiss Chairmanship will be Education, Youth and Social Media and the strong involvement of civil society organizations will be a priority. Several projects developed by civil society organizations and supported by the government will be part of the chairmanship program. They include a web-application, testimonies of Holocaust survivors and a travelling exhibition.

Mr. Chairman,

In closing, I would like to reiterate that with Antisemitism on the rise in many of our societies, including my own, and with growing intolerance and prejudice, we need to redouble our efforts in countering these tendencies.

It is regrettable that we were not able to agree on a working definition of Antisemitism, as adopted by the IHRA in Bucharest last year, at the Ministerial Council in Hamburg. Nevertheless, the OSCE, and in particular the ODIHR, offer profound expertise and a broad set of tools to assist the participating States in tackling these challenges. We should all make good use of them.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.