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**STATEMENT BY  
THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1408th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

26 January 2023

**On the occasion of International Holocaust Remembrance Day**

The European Union thanks Ambassador Ann Bernes for her address on behalf of the Swedish Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). As a Permanent International Partner of the IHRA, we welcome her commitment and recall the ministerial declaration adopted in Brussels in 2020, 20 years after the founding Stockholm Declaration.

On the occasion of the 78th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, we thank the IHRA for its vital work in ensuring that the truth about the Shoah is never forgotten, obscured or distorted.

Today, under the false pretext of fighting Nazism, Russia has brought the horrors of war back to Europe, while reminding us that peace cannot be taken for granted. We strongly condemn the misuse of the argument of combating Nazism and reject Russia's inaccurate and inappropriate use of the term "denazification" to justify its war of aggression against Ukraine. Such distortion erodes our understanding of the Shoah, disrespects its legacy and undermines democratic principles. We also deplore the deliberate attacks by Russian forces on Ukrainian historical, religious and cultural monuments, and in particular around the Babi Yar memorial site, and the destruction of synagogues and memorials in Ukraine. We recall that the deliberate destruction of protected cultural heritage constitutes a war crime.

While conspiracy theories and attacks on Jews and the memory of the Shoah proliferated during the COVID-19 pandemic, we are now faced with the emergence of new forms of war-related anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitic acts are unjustifiable and run counter to our fundamental values of the equality of all and combating discrimination of any kind. We have a duty all the more to remain vigilant and to act resolutely against all forms of anti-Semitism, racism and discrimination.

The European Union is committed to combating all forms of anti-Semitism, including attempts to legitimize, justify or trivialize the Shoah. In March 2022, the Council of the European Union adopted conclusions on combating racism and anti-Semitism, in which it called on Member States to develop action plans and strategies to implement the EU Anti-racism Action Plan and the EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life. Moreover, the Digital Services Act adopted last year aims to limit the distribution of illegal content online, including content that incites hatred or violence: major platforms will have to allow Member States access to their algorithms and provide a tool for users to report illegal content and products so that the platforms can quickly remove or disable access.

Over the years, the OSCE has developed a significant body of commitments to combat anti-Semitism. They form part of the wider framework of OSCE commitments in the fight against all forms of intolerance and discrimination in the context of promoting the rule of law and universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in combating anti-Semitism, intolerance and hate crimes, whatever their motives, is a valuable tool available to the participating States. In particular, we welcome the database developed by the Office on hate crimes in the OSCE area.

We also take this opportunity to recall that the non-legally binding working definition of anti-Semitism adopted by the IHRA in Bucharest in 2016 is a useful tool for combating anti-Semitism. We take note of the adoption by the IHRA in 2020 of a non-legally binding definition of anti-Gypsyism/anti-Roma discrimination, which could also play a useful role in combating racism and discrimination.

We appreciate the priority given by the OSCE Chairmanship of North Macedonia to the fight against intolerance and discrimination. We welcome the organization of the Conference on Addressing Anti-Semitism in the OSCE Region to be held in early February in Skopje.

Allow me to assure you, Madam Ambassador, and the Croatian Chairmanship starting in March of the determined support of the European Union at your side to ensure that the memory of the Shoah and all its victims will never be forgotten but will continue to live on in us so as to help us build a world of peace and respect for all.

The candidate countries North Macedonia<sup>1</sup>, Montenegro<sup>1</sup>, Albania<sup>1</sup>, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, the potential candidate country Georgia, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Liechtenstein, as well as Andorra, Monaco and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

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<sup>1</sup> North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.