

**STATEMENT BY HON. MARGHERITA BONIVER,
DEPUTY MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF ITALY, AT THE MEETING OF THE
TASK FORCE FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON HOLOCAUST EDUCATION,
REMEMBRANCE, AND RESEARCH**

ROME, JUNE 9, 2004

Dear Friends, ladies and gentlemen, I am honoured and proud to welcome you all to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy for this important symposium, which confirms the crucial role of the International Task Force in supporting, both politically and socially, education, remembrance, and research on the Holocaust. We represent here countries and organisations that share common values and accept the commitments, principles, and goals of the Stockholm Declaration, which is the cornerstone of our action.

Dear friends, recently, the President of the Italian Republic pointed out that *“peoples that have no memory of their past cannot master their future.”* This is particularly true in the case of the Holocaust: to forget the past means to run the risk that coming generations may again have to face the tragedy of ethnic cleansing, if not even of genocide. Shedding light on the magnitude of the Holocaust has to be our personal responsibility and daily task.

Younger generations seem particularly defenceless in front of the risk of losing memory: schools have not done all that they should to keep alive the memory of the Shoah. Whereas, following the Second World War, the vivid memories of these horrors helped to create a climate of unconditional solidarity with the Jewish communities, a gradual relaxation of vigilance has

become apparent with the passage of time, with the result that unexpected opportunities have opened up for those who wish to put history under scrutiny.

For this reason, it is increasingly crucial that all stakeholders—governments, schools, nongovernmental organisations—make all possible efforts to advance knowledge and preserve the memory of the Holocaust. Education at all levels should deploy all its pedagogic capabilities and address the subject in relation to the various disciplines: literature, psychology, history, religious studies.

The Italian Parliament, without distinction as to political affiliation, has recently approved a number of guidelines urging the Government and the public administration to strengthen efforts to develop an understanding of the phenomenon of antisemitism and of the history of the Holocaust, together with an awareness of the important contribution made by Italian Jews to our national history, from the struggle against Fascism to the formation of the Republic.

Italy itself feels the heavy burden of the memory of a past that is now distant but not any less painful. Internal political events led Italy between the two World Wars to contradict a tradition of tolerance dating back to ancient times. This is another reason why we are anxious today to be on the front line in the study of the Holocaust, in the understanding of prejudice and racism, in the struggle against any re-emergence of antisemitism: we are determined that the horrors that we witnessed in the past shall never again be repeated. Such willingness has often been recalled by our Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, who has always reaffirmed the crucial importance of a

civil society aware of the risks represented by antisemitism, which cannot be defeated without a proper understanding of the Holocaust.

To this end, I am convinced that the important work being done by the International Task Force for Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research, fully supported by the Italian Government, provides the right context in which to promote plans, initiatives, and activities and to foster reflections upon the moral issues raised by those horrible events. In such a framework, I wish to assure you that the commitment of the Government and mine in particular will keep representing a main priority for our country.

Thank you.