



Statement by H.E. Elín Flygenring

Iceland's Ambassador for Human Rights

At the OSCE Conference on Addressing Anti-Semitism

Valletta, 8-9 April 2024

I thank you, Madame Chair.

Iceland thanks Malta for convening the Conference on Addressing Anti-Semitism in the OSCE region.

Human rights and fundamental freedoms for all are at the core of Iceland's foreign and domestic policy. This includes freedom of religion or belief and freedom of opinion and expression.

For centuries, millions of people have been victims, wounded and killed on the grounds of their religious beliefs. The tragic lessons we have drawn from history show that we must always remain alert to the risk of rising antisemitism and religious intolerance, especially amidst the alarming rise we are witnessing today. Persecution based on religious beliefs must never be condoned.

In the world's increasingly interconnected and multicultural communities, we must strengthen efforts to combat prejudice and hatred based on religion, including antisemitism, both online and offline. If allowed to fester, antisemitism

and religious intolerance will poison our societies and our larger international community.

All OSCE participating States need to urgently ensure that the crisis in the Middle East does not deepen divisions at home. The barbaric terrorist attack on 7 October committed by Hamas, which Iceland has condemned in the strongest terms, was the deadliest attack on Jews since the Holocaust. The immense suffering of innocent civilians who have been killed or taken hostage is unimaginable.

Respect for both religious freedom and freedom of expression is a continuous challenge and a long-term project to herald. Amidst the growing spread of disinformation and fake news online, fuelling hatred and intolerance, it is ever more important to fight these trends and protect our values of democracy, fundamental freedoms, and human rights.

The OSCE's work to combat religious intolerance and discrimination remains crucial and ever more relevant, including the work of ODIHR and the OSCE's three Personal Representatives for Tolerance and Non-Discrimination.

Given the importance of maintaining knowledge and understanding of the unimaginable horrors of the Second World War, in which over six million Jews were tragically murdered, Iceland is preparing recommendations on how to commemorate the Holocaust as well as proposals on how to increase education in Iceland about the horrors of the Holocaust.

For its part, Iceland will work together with other States to ensure that such horrors will never happen again.

I thank you, Madame Chair.