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Fifteen years have passed since the OSCE held its first conference on anti-Semitism in June 2003, in Vienna. It addressed specific matters relevant to anti-Semitism, including the importance of understanding and defining it, the need for education about Judaism and the Jewish community, and the value in promoting Holocaust education and remembrance.

But it also spoke in general and comprehensive ways in offering recommendations. It underscored the obligation for governments to identify and monitor hate crimes, the need to train police and prosecutors, and to teach students about religion and religious communities generally.

In that pre-social media era it flagged concerns about the spread of hate on the Internet and the responsibility of traditional media to avoid promoting intolerance.

It offered the OSCE as a place for governments to share best practices and to prod its participating States to do more.

Before the conference had come to an end the German delegation stood up to propose that it host a follow-up conference in Berlin the following year. That conference and the Berlin Declaration that resulted from it were a milestone in efforts by the OSCE to tackle the problem of anti-Semitism.

In carefully worded language it began a process of defining anti-Semitism as it relates to Israel. It spoke of anti-Semitism taking on “new forms and manifestations” and made clear that incidents in Israel and the Middle East could never justify anti-Semitic attacks.

It spelled out commitments for participating States and for ODHIR, including identifying and monitoring hate crimes and promoting Holocaust education. It led to the creation of a new department in ODIHR focused on promoting tolerance and non-discrimination.

Before the year came to an end, the OSCE had agreed to designate three Personal Representatives, with mandates to focus on the various forms of intolerance and discrimination.

I have had the opportunity to be part of these developments—first as an active member of civil society and now in my tenth year serving as the Chairmanship’s Personal Representative. Let me share with you what I believe are some of the lessons learned over this span of time.

We must acknowledge that anti-Semitism in the OSCE region is no less a problem today than it was fifteen years ago. But we are better able to understand it, governments are more willing to acknowledge it, and we have more tools at our disposal to address it.

In January of this year the Italian Chairmanship organized the Rome International Conference on the Fight against Anti-Semitism. The report of that conference, which I hope will soon be distributed within the OSCE, echoes that first OSCE conference in 2003. It too stressed the value of education, spoke of the need to understand religions and religious differences, and reviewed the progress of governments in monitoring and responding to hate crimes. However, what set it apart were the presenters and discussants themselves, who now have the benefit of real work experience to share.

And today's environment is not the same as it was fifteen years ago.

In 2003, we had not fully appreciated the very real security challenges that Jewish communities faced and the genuine anxiety that many Jews have come to feel in just the public observance of their faith. It has taken lethal attacks and physical harassment to mobilize authorities.

We must acknowledge the complicated and even contradictory forces on our work to combat anti-Semitism connected to immigration and the politics of immigration. Large numbers of migrants have come from majority Muslim countries in the Middle East and North Africa, where anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli sentiments are commonplace.

We don't know yet that this will mean an increase in anti-Semitism, but it adds to the challenges of integrating them and to standing concerns about anti-Semitism in the more established Muslim communities.

At the same time, these immigrants themselves are victims of prejudice, and they're being used to fuel the campaigns of right-wing, populist parties. Their support is growing, and these parties and their members are no less anti-Semitic than they are anti-Muslim.

Even as more countries promote Holocaust education and designate official commemoration days, we see in some places where the Holocaust took place a growing distortion of that history. This includes the veneration of fascist-era heroes, the inability to acknowledge the role and responsibility of local collaborators, and even outright opposition to critical analysis.

For Jewish communities comprised primarily of Holocaust survivors and their descendants, this is much than a question of history; it goes to their very sense of belonging.

There has been real progress in employing a comprehensive definition of anti-Semitism. That first Working Definition, issued by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) in 2005, was adopted by the 31-nation International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in 2016. It has been recommended for use by the European Parliament and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and a growing number of countries have formally adopted it. Only last week the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom and the Archbishop of Canterbury jointly endorsed the definition with its full ist of examples and without any modifications, a very public condemnation of anti-Semitism in the political arena.

In closing, I want to speak directly to ODIHR's Words into Action program and to its supporters and its critics.

Its guidelines for governments on Jewish community security provide clear and succinct measures for law enforcement to follow and important recommendations drawn from practical experience. Its recently-released guidelines on education to combat anti-Semitism should serve a similar purpose in shaping curricula and supplemental efforts to inform the attitudes of students.

The "critics," to be clear, are not challenging the worth of these specific projects. Rather, some say that OSCE and ODIHR should instead focus on "holistic" approaches to combating intolerance and should thus avoid dwelling on its specific forms, such as anti-Semitism or Islamophobia. But this is a false choice, rejected by the OSCE years ago, and one that we need not make. We must understand these different forms of intolerance in all their specificity if we are to be successful in combating them. But the solutions themselves, as we have learned, will have much in common.

I understand, too, that some people believe we should not "favor" one group over another. They say if we make special efforts to fight anti-Semitism we are somehow doing less for combating other forms of intolerance. The danger in this criticism, of course, is that we will do less for everyone, rather than doing more for more of us.

Thus, I very much hope and would urge ODIHR with the support of civil society and the participating States to build on the success of the Words into Action project. Let's move to sustain and disseminate these first guidelines addressing security and education and work to see that they are adopted and expanded. We have amassed the professional expertise, and I am sure that that there are participating States that are prepared to offer financial support to enable the work to continue.

At the same time, let's redouble efforts to develop the proper and necessary programs to fight intolerance and discrimination against Muslims and to fight racism and xenophobia and discrimination against Christians and other religions. Surely, there will be donors willing to support them, too.

As we learned back in 2004, the commitment of participating States and the capacity of ODIHR to fight intolerance and discrimination go together.