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**Panel discussion on
Evolving Hatred: BDS and Antisemitism Today**

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**Intervention by
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In response to the German philosopher Adorno's famous dictum that „to write poetry after the holocaust is barbaric” – this poem was written after Auschwitz, by a Hungarian Catholic poet, János Pilinszky, who wanted us never to forget. He dedicated his life to writing about the sin of humanity and the responsibility of the ones who have collaborated with the evil.

*Where you've fallen, you will stay.
In the whole universe this one
and only place is the sole place
which you have made your very own.*

*The country runs away from you.
House, mill, poplar—everything
is struggling with you here, as if
in nothingness mutating.*

*But now it's you who won't give up.
Did we fleece you? You've grown rich.
Did we blind you? You watch us still.
You bear witness without speech.*

(János Pilinszky: On the Wall of a KZ Lager)

Keeping the memory of Holocaust is not an easy responsibility. It means speaking about the horrors that are “unspeakable,” it means experiencing that which is often regarded as “unimaginable.” It may be tempting for some to let these horrors fade and become a distant memory. We are not naturally predisposed to see evil and to recognize human potential for it.

Millions of souls were lost during the years of Nazi tyranny. Let us pay our respect to those who have perished and suffered, and let us reaffirm our solemn vow to never let it happen again.

The victims were not from distant lands, they were our neighbours, our colleagues, our fellow citizens. It was in the heart of the proud European civilization that the murderous Nazi machine exterminated millions of innocent lives with mind-numbing efficiency of the death camps.

It is in Europe where the forests, the meadows, the buildings keep the memories of the children, women, and men who perished in their midst. And it is in Europe where we have a special responsibility to face our past, to remember those who fell victim to the Nazi ideology, and to do the utmost to keep history from repeating itself here, or anywhere else in the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The remembrance of Holocaust is not only about the victims, it is also about the heroes. The heroes are the men or women whose spouses, parents, and children were murdered before their eyes. The heroes are the survivors of Holocaust, those who passed through the horrors of the concentration camps and found the courage to fall in love, to have children, and to begin their lives anew. These survivors tell us the story of the Holocaust most vividly, and by doing so, render an invaluable service to humanity.

Excellences, Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to speak today, and I would like to thank Ambassador Danon, Permanent Representative of Israel for inviting me to speak today on the fight against anti-Semitism. I have been working personally for 28 years in different continents and different chapeaus on creating platforms for interreligious dialogue, understanding, fighting xenophobia and anti-Semites, and creating a climate of mutual acceptance and respect. As, I believe, tolerance is not enough. Being committed to these values is just a natural cause for me.

Nazi Germany occupied Hungary on 19th of March in 1944 in order to fulfil the final solution towards the Jews. They were deported to concentration camps, mainly to Auschwitz–Birkenau.

Standing in the house of high diplomacy, let us remember the foreign diplomats in Budapest who, in 1944, issued protective papers and hung their countries' flags over entire buildings that sheltered Jewish citizens, so as to put them under their country's diplomatic immunity. However, missions of Portugal, San Salvador, Spain, Sweden, the Swedish Red Cross, Switzerland, Nuncio Angelo Rotta, Raoul Wallenberg or Italian Businessman, such as Giorgio Perlasca succeeded in rescuing only thousands.

But most of the Hungarian victims have perished in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

This April, I had the honour to participate, with fellow UN ambassadors, on the invitation of Ambassador Danon, in the “March of the Living” in Auschwitz- Birkenau, where we walked with President Duda and President Rivlin. It was a profound and historic event, after which we continued our journey in Israel to celebrate Israel's 70th Independence Day.

This journey was a spiritual journey: from the silent place where victims lie to the bustling streets of survivors and the children of survivors.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Stemming from a hostility towards the talented, prosperous, vibrant Jewish communities of the start of the 20th century led to exclusion, expropriation and bloodshed, aimed at destroying the social, economic and cultural heritage and values of this community.

Anti-Semitism has a detrimental impact on societies, turning citizens against citizens, neighbours against neighbours, and drawing lines between communities who were living together in peace for so many years before.

Anti-Semitism often leads to violent extremism, committed in the name of ideology, religion, or simply out of hatred. It challenges the core values of democracy and human rights and poses a clear threat to our societies.

Your Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Hungarian Government implements a principle of zero tolerance policy related to all forms of Anti-Semitism.

The extremely dangerous trends all over the world can only be tackled by strong political leadership, as well as coordinated and comprehensive policies and actions.

The Hungarian Government has implemented a series of important legislative and policy measures with a focus on three key areas: 1) law enforcement and legal measures; 2) Holocaust education and remembrance; 3) the support of the revival of Jewish culture.

Holocaust denial is banned in Hungary. Violence or incitement against a community is part of the Criminal Code. The paramilitary group “Hungarian Guard” was banned by a modification of the Criminal Code that is strictly enforced by the Government.

A recent amendment of the Constitution enables the prosecution of hate speech under civil law, a step which was welcomed by the Jewish community. For example, the Hungarian court issued a verdict which ordered the deletion of an article denying Holocaust on a far right online portal.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Education is able to build peace in the minds of men and women.

The main source of hatred is fear. Fear of the unknown. Fear of something we do not know, or do not understand. And nowadays, information comes from everywhere, and in every form, often creating misunderstanding, fear and hatred. We have to take initiative and educate our children from an early age.

First, we have to teach them about their own religion, culture and heritage. Those who embrace their own identity, who they are and where they come from, will not be afraid to learn about the world, the diversity of religions, cultures and peoples.

As the African saying goes: “It takes a village to raise a child” - all members of the society have to get together for this aim. We need the families and parents to shape the way a child looks at the world and to break down stereotypes. We need the schools to teach the painful lessons of history and to build trust. In Hungary, Holocaust education is compulsory in public schools. We need our priests, imams and rabbis to open the eyes of the young generation to our shared common values, such as respect, compassion, and peaceful coexistence.

Hungary was among the countries joining the Stockholm Declaration in 2000, and two years later, it became a full Member of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research.

Holocaust education is part of the national core curriculum in Hungary. Museums and research centres dedicated to the Holocaust can be found all over the country.

As part of our commitment to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust and to honour those who stood against it, 16 April was designated as National Holocaust Remembrance Day and a Holocaust Memorial Centre was established.

The Hungarian Government is dedicated to the promotion of Jewish culture and the preservation of Jewish heritage sites. Come and visit Mazel Tov, one of the coolest and fashionable cafés in Budapest, the meeting point of young people from all over the world, and witness the true revival of Jewish culture. The old Jewish District in Budapest has become a vibrant cultural centre, located in a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The Hungarian Government allocated a strong support to the renovation of Jewish cemeteries and synagogues and involves students in the process to raise their awareness about the Holocaust and the importance of the fight against Antisemitism.

The Hungarian government attributed 4 million dollars to the renovation of the Jewish cemeteries between 2002 and 2017, and another 1.5 million dollars for the same cause this January (there are 1550 Jewish cemeteries altogether in Hungary).

We launched a reconstruction program of synagogues in 2015, with 10 million dollars. The Dohány street synagogue of Budapest alone was supported with 3.6 million dollars.

For the reconstruction of buildings, cultural heritage and artwork in the property of the Jewish community, the Government attributed around 21 million dollars for the period of 1999–2017.

To respond to the growing interest in visiting Jewish cultural heritage sites and pilgrimage destinations, the touristic development of numerous sites were supported by more than 5 million dollars.

The Government invests in monitoring of cases of hate crime and incitement through an independent research institute, the Brussels Institute. Based on its findings, anti-Semitic hate crimes and hate speech have been on the decrease in Hungary in the past three years, and no cases of physical harm were reported. This means that Hungary is one of the safest countries in Europe in this regard. We do not need police or army protection to go to Jewish schools, hospitals or synagogues.

As a former journalist, I have seen the power of media, and its immense responsibility in shaping public discourse. As a compass, it is setting the norms on what is right and wrong, and what people can or cannot think, say or do. In 1990, still as a journalist and producer, I started the ever first regular television programme in Hungary on Jewish religion, culture, history and people. As you know, during Communism, all religions were banned, and the end of communism gave a breath of fresh air: a revival of our religious heritage, in all its diversity. I remember, this was an era of liberation for many of us who had been side-lined because of our belief – being able to express ourselves, to worship and live fully our traditions and values is something we have been fighting for and something that we cherish ever since. And this was also the first time that I was sent threatening letters from the American and German neo-Nazis.

Nowadays, when social media provides for a platform for everyone to express their thoughts and feelings, what can retain people from fostering hatred and incitement? And we need, more than ever, dialogue with each other, open and true dialogue. There are always political differences, but what matters is how we handle them. The only meaningful way is through dialogue - an open and respectful dialogue: not only arguing, but also listening to each other, understanding each other and being open to each other's perspectives.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have to overcome anti-Semitism in Europe and beyond: with education for peace and diversity, with an open and true dialogue among religions and cultures, and with upholding nurturing the rich cultural heritage of the Jewish community all around the world joining forces with influential media platform in order to communicate well, build trust and understanding, fight ignorance.

The Hungarian Government and personally myself are and will always remain committed in this endeavour.