



**UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov's
Remarks at the 6th Global Forum for Combating Antisemitism**

Jerusalem, 19 March 2018

Your Excellency, Minister of Education and Diaspora Affairs Naftali Bennett,

Your Excellency, Minister of Justice Ayelet Shaked,

President of the World Jewish Congress, Ronald Lauder,

Ministers, ambassadors, dear friends,

It is an honor to be back at this important gathering. I am grateful to Prime Minister Netanyahu, the Government of Israel and to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for once again extending an invitation to the United Nations to participate.

Allow me to extend the greetings of Secretary-General António Guterres, who regrets that he is unable to attend today's important conference and has asked me to represent him today.

Before I begin, I would like to express my condolences to the families of Adiel Kolman, Ziv Daos and Netanel Kahalani, who were killed by Palestinian perpetrators in the past few days.

There is nothing heroic in killing.

Just look around you in the region— has violence and terror helped any cause, any nation, any country? Those who inspire and praise such attacks do not serve the cause of peace.

Dear guests,

The fact we are all here today, for the sixth time, in Jerusalem, at the Global Forum for Combating Antisemitism is a testament.

It is a testament to the commitment of nations and peoples around the world to never forget the crimes of the Shoah.

It is a testament to never allow hatred, racisms and discrimination and xenophobia to rule the world.

But most of all, it is a testament to the resilience of the Jewish people and to their long and painful journey home.

So it is most appropriate today, to open this forum with three very clear and simple messages and address them to all who seek to fan the flames of hatred, terror and war:

The State of Israel is here to stay.

It is the home of the Jewish people.

In the modern context, denying Israel's right to exist is anti-Semitism at its worst.

The modern state of Israel was born out of the ashes of the Second World War. It was built and defended by Jews who came home from across the world, it was established to be a democracy that respects human rights, protects minorities and extends support to immigrants. It is not a colonial project, but a project of hope.

The Shoah did not occur in a vacuum. It was a culmination of thousands of years of persecution from the exile of ancient Babylon, through the pogroms in Tsarist Russia, to the systematic extermination in the Nazi death camps.

The United Nations believes that we have an obligation not only to remember the boundless evil that led to the attempt to systematically eliminate the Jewish people, but to stand up and confront hatred and xenophobia where we see it.

Today we see incidents of anti-Semitism, racism and intolerance increasing globally, triggered by populism and by divisive politics.

In Europe, we are seeing the re-emergence of neo-Nazi and other extreme nationalist groups.

In America we hear ominous chants of "blood and soil" and "Jews will not replace us".

Online there is a surge in support for racist or supremacist causes.

And there are those who continue to call for the destruction of Israel. They sharpen their weapons as we speak.

Looking closer to home, we must recognize and denounce anti-Semitism here in the region.

In too many societies across the Middle East, the demonization of Jews continues unabated.

Many have often spoken of how a peaceful two-state resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will pave the way towards resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

They are right.

Yet at the same time, an enduring peace must be based on the acceptance that Jews, Christians and Muslims all have a historic and religious connection to this land, to this city.

While history has taught us that blind hatred and propaganda need little to turn into violence, it also teaches us that we have a choice.

It teaches us that no one is born hating other people.

It teaches us that we have a choice whether to give in to xenophobia and hatred, or respect different peoples, faiths and cultures.

The Shoah was the result of turning hatred into policy. It became possible because too many people chose to collaborate or looked the other way.

This is why attempts to rewrite the history of the Holocaust and downplay the complicity of those who participated in or enabled genocide are so concerning.

Renowned Israeli writer and Holocaust survivor Aharon Appelfeld, who recently passed away, described his memory of confronting indifference:

“I noticed that all the doors and windows of our non-Jewish neighbors were suddenly shut, and we walked alone in empty streets. None of our many neighbors, [...] was at the window when we dragged along our suitcases.”

A sad and tragic picture imprinted in the family history of so many Jews who were lucky to survive the killing grounds of Europe.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Some people did not look away.

They did not keep their doors and windows shut.

In my country, Bulgaria, people came out. To stand on the train tracks and to not allow the deportations. In a country that was allied to Nazi Germany.

While sadly 11,300 Jews living in Bulgarian-administered territories in northern Greece, Eastern Serbia, and Macedonia were deported by the Nazis and their collaborators to be murdered in Treblinka, Bulgaria's Jewish community of 50,000 people survived the war and has been instrumental in building the modern State of Israel.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We all have a choice to look away from the problems of anti-Semitism, xenophobia and intolerance, or to confront them.

We all have a responsibility to educate our children long before their young hearts and minds are poisoned by propaganda.

To this end, the United Nations and the Secretary-General are committed to continue working to educate people around the world about the horrors of the past and how we can all contribute to ensuring they are never forgotten and never repeated.

I wish your conference every success.

Thank you.