

**International Conference on Welfare for Holocaust Survivors
and Other Victims of Nazi Persecution**

May 26-27, 2015

Prague, Czech Republic



CONCLUDING STATEMENT BY THE CO-CHAIRMEN

UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF:



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Czech Republic



WITH THE SUPPORT OF:



Concluding Statement by the Co-Chairmen

Ambassador Stuart Eizenstat, Special Adviser of the US Secretary of State on Holocaust Issues, and Ambassador Jiří Šitler, Special Envoy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic for Holocaust Issues and Combat of Antisemitism

International Conference on Welfare for Holocaust Survivors and Other Victims of Nazi Persecution

Living with Dignity

Prague, May 27, 2015

On the basis of an initiative of the European Shoah Legacy Institute (ESLI) and upon the invitation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, representatives from 39 governments, the European Union, non-governmental organizations and independent experts met on May 26-27, 2015 in Prague to explore best practices and realistic mechanisms to assist Holocaust (Shoah) survivors and other victims of Nazi persecution with the view of them having at least a modicum of dignity in their remaining years. The participants:

Recognized Holocaust (Shoah) survivors and other victims of Nazi persecution are living testaments to human endurance in the face of a great tragedy and form an important part of our universal and national memory.

Acknowledged that it is unacceptable for those who suffered so grievously in their youth to live out their last years in deprivation. Because of the advanced age, high levels of vulnerability and often poverty of Holocaust (Shoah) survivors and other victims of Nazi persecution, it is imperative to respect their personal dignity and the related urgency to immediately address their basic needs, including medical, social and emotional assistance.

Agreed that it is a joint international, European and national responsibility to honor and assist Holocaust (Shoah) survivors and other victims of Nazi persecution, and to prevent resurgence of anti-Semitism and denial of Holocaust (Shoah) and other Nazi crimes. This includes inter alia providing immediate care for persons who are victims and, at the same time, living historical witnesses of the unprecedented and most terrible crime against humanity; continuing support for passing down their message and testimony to the next generations, thus contributing to avoid that the Holocaust (Shoah) era (1933-1945) is viewed only as a remote historical event; and searching for new forms of communication and ways of presenting the legacy of their memory for the future at a time when there will be no more eyewitnesses to the worst genocide in world history.

Taking into account the 1998 Washington Principles on Nazi-looted Art, and the subsequent process of reparations and compensation for Holocaust (Shoah) survivors and other victims of Nazi persecution embodied in the 2009 Terezín Declaration; the Joint Declaration of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the representatives of the European Commission in 2009; the 2010 Best Practices and Guidelines for the Restitution and/or Compensation of Real (Immovable) Property Confiscated by the Nazis and their Allies; the 2012 Immovable Property Review Conference Concluding Statement by the Co-

Chairmen; and the follow-up events as a starting point for improving the welfare of Holocaust (Shoah) survivors and other victims of Nazi persecution by creating a new type of partnership across European institutions, states, and non-governmental and international organizations.

The participants:

- 1) Acknowledged that the experience of Holocaust (Shoah) and other Nazi crimes perpetrated against millions of Jewish and other innocent victims, and the goal of preventing the repetition of these crimes, have left a lasting positive impact upon the goals and values of the international community, including the European Union, such as principles of tolerance, diversity and intercultural dialogue among European citizens, and the entire international society.
- 2) Recognized that Holocaust (Shoah) survivors and other victims of Nazi persecution, who are of an advanced age and who live with a feeling of despair due to the physical and psychological suffering that they endured under National Socialism, have higher needs than the average population, and that the benefits provided to them should reflect this fact.
- 3) Affirmed the acute and urgent need for the existence of comprehensive medical and social programs/mechanisms and other benefits to enable Holocaust (Shoah) survivors and other victims of Nazi persecution to live in dignity in the years to come.
- 4) Acknowledged that to effectively provide for the immediate needs of Holocaust (Shoah) survivors and other victims of Nazi persecution it is important to coordinate efforts and to enhance partnership among international, European, national, local agencies, NGOs and civil society in the countries in which these persons live and which they come from.
- 5) Recognized the importance of easy access to information on assistance for Holocaust (Shoah) survivors and other victims of Nazi persecution, commended states that have established structures to this effect such as appointing an official with the responsibility to coordinate mechanisms/programs to assist Holocaust (Shoah) survivors or other victims of Nazi persecution, and recommended identification of national focal points, as well as other relevant structures, to help make Holocaust (Shoah) survivors and other victims of Nazi persecution aware of available services and benefits.
- 6) Taking into account that in the EU, social welfare is the primary responsibility of member states, the participants recognized the special role and capacities of the European Union, and recommended the identification of an EU official/special coordinator to combat anti-Semitism and to address Holocaust (Shoah) era issues, including the implementation of the Terezín Declaration (2009).
- 7) Recognized the significance of civil society in providing care and its role as an instrument for overcoming the social isolation that many Holocaust (Shoah) survivors and other victims of Nazi persecution continue to experience, but also as a tool for promoting intergenerational dialogue and solidarity, and stressed the importance of financial and other support to victims' associations and NGOs engaged in such activities through national and, wherever applicable, EU programmes.

- 8) Commended existing and advocated further development of public-private partnerships as a means to provide services to Holocaust (Shoah) survivors and other victims of Nazi persecution.
- 9) Discussed and considered mechanisms/programs aimed at providing immediate and direct assistance to Holocaust (Shoah) survivors or other victims of Nazi persecution. A number of participating states have adopted such mechanisms and programs. The practices in this area include, among others:
 - (a) Tax exemptions on compensation payments, pensions and other welfare assistance given to Holocaust (Shoah) survivors and other victims of Nazi persecution as a universal practice without including such payments or other pensions or benefits as part of income in calculating eligibility for social welfare assistance for elderly survivors;
 - (b) Special pensions, schemes, programmes and/or funds, including home care, tailored to their special needs;
 - (c) The use of proceeds from Jewish Holocaust era heirless property in order to provide for the medical and social needs of Holocaust (Shoah) survivors, irrespective of their country of residence, where appropriate;
 - (d) Social security benefits for victims of the Holocaust (Shoah) and other Nazi persecution including those who reside outside their war-time country of origin.
- 10) Called also on international universal and regional organizations, i. a. the United Nations, Council of Europe and OSCE to pay special attention to the issues of social protection and support of Holocaust (Shoah) survivors and other victims of Nazi persecution, including organization of international events and exchanging best practices in this area.

The participants commended ESLI for organizing the conference, and agreed that ESLI should continue to follow the progress achieved following this statement with interim reports in order to assess the results and to advise on further strategy and tactical steps to achieve the desired goals.

The Co-Chairmen encouraged organizations, NGOs, the 47 countries that endorsed the 2009 Terezín Declaration and the 39 countries participating in the Living With Dignity conference to support ESLI both politically and financially so that it can carry on its important work.