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# **Speech**

by

**The President of the Swiss Confederation  
H.E. Mr. Samuel Schmid**

**at the inauguration of the new Yad Vashem Museum**

**Jerusalem, March 16, 2005**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Six weeks ago we commemorated the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The major international participation – of Holocaust survivors and heads of state – is proof that Auschwitz continues as ever to be a universal and important symbol of the Holocaust. We are reminded once again that there are no words to express the full horror of the crimes that were committed. Nevertheless, we are bound to keep talking about them and to keep their memory alive.

The work of Yad Vashem, in particular its new museum, is part of this process of reflection. For half a century, Yad Vashem has been collecting testimonies and documents about the victims of the Holocaust and searching for names to put to them. A few months ago, it published a data base on the internet containing the names and recounting the fates of more than three million victims. In this way Yad Vashem restores their identity and helps us in our efforts to keep these martyrs and their stories in our memories.

It does this because remembrance rescues the victims from anonymity and indifference. The aim, however, is not only to keep these memories but to sustain them. The obligation to remember is at the same time the obligation to educate. To be properly understood in a world in constant change, especially by those generations born decades after the tragedy, the “never again” wish requires that the form it takes be continually adapted. But it must never be rendered banal. The inauguration of the new Yad Vashem museum takes place in this spirit. It is a new building designed to house a museum which has been enlarged and reorganised to meet the developments in museology.

To the names of the martyrs of the Holocaust Yad Vashem has added those of the heroes: the “Righteous Among the Nations”. To honour the Righteous 60 years after the end of the second world war is a sign of hope. Actions of the magnitude of those

of Karl Lutz, who saved the lives of 60,000 Jews in Budapest, are well known. Actions of a more modest scale - but no less worthy of our admiration – that we discover with the award of Yad Vashem medals tell us the following: Even in the darkest hours of history men and women have acted with courage to defend the universal values of justice and solidarity. May their example be an inspiration to us all in our daily lives.

On behalf of the people and the authorities of Switzerland, I extend my congratulations on the realisation of this new museum as well as my admiration for the work of remembrance and education that Yad Vashem has accomplished and continues to accomplish.