

## **SPEECH BY DR. ISRAEL SINGER**

**Chairman of the Board of Governors, World Jewish Congress; President of the Conference of Jewish Material Claims Against Germany; Vice-Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council.**

**It is truly a pleasure to speak after you, Mr. Vice President of Norway, Jan Petersen, and I remember clearly when we went to Oslo the first time to introduce the struggle for Jewish memory and restitution in the 1990's and almost fell through an open door and indeed we found how a nation found its own past and attempted to train its own people to re-educate its own people, to understand what happened – if only to a very small number of people – which made a great impression on the mass of Norwegians. The experience of Norway spread throughout Europe and for us the struggle for restitution was not merely a struggle to return to Jews that which was taken away from them financially, but was a struggle for education. Because those nations that understood that something was taken from the people when they were stripped of their physical belongings, before they were stripped of their lives, and that indeed the struggle to return to a person that what belongs to him is the struggle to return to that person his life; the bones that had been torn from what was left of the skeleton came after the skin that was torn, after the clothes that were taken, after the homes that were stolen, after the books that were burnt, after the money that was taken and only the understanding of the nations that came finally to the realization they, their indifference, their participation, their institutionalization of violence and theft as a precursor to killing and death was the beginning of a new era.**

**It began in a small country which understood and it spread to the neighbors and I was overwhelmed when we heard how the Prime Minister Persson who himself took upon himself to write a book to teach his own people to become a teacher and they asked Elie Wiesel - how does one teach this?; He taught him and he learned to do it, Swedish style and it moved. And you heard today how the Prime Minister of Belgium became a teacher! To us! It is important because the Belgians are hearing this from him and it will change.**

**We built Yad Vashem not to teach the Belgians, not to teach the Norwegians, not the Swedes, but to teach ourselves. So that we do not forget. We believe that there is a subjective Jewish memory that we need to remind ourselves of that some of us seem to forget outside and inside Israel. It is for this reason – for ourselves that we built this! 2000 years the oral tradition of the Jewish law was never written down and was not allowed to be written down, because it was assumed that it could be remembered by great scholars, by people who knew the knowledge of the Torah. And there was a struggle and finally, because people decided to that Torah will not be forgotten, they wrote it down. After a great struggle. And the oral tradition became the Talmud and became that which we transmit from generation to generation.**

**This museum is the way we are going to teach our children, because we will forget otherwise. Make no mistake. We forget! We forget all kinds of things! And we cannot be allowed to forget this. And if we forget, believe me, you will forget.**

**So I am pleased to see how Avner has built here a place which indeed will be what museums are supposed to be – a stimulant, a place in which people will be stimulated – not to learn everything there is to know, but to go to a book, to go to a library and to go to schools and to learn indeed what we were and what our history was. Just as the museum of the Talmud does not teach you Jewish knowledge, but stimulates you to learn about it.**

**We thank you all for coming here and for building in your own places. Your own stimulants to remind your own people. And for those of you who have already reminded your people as to what is going on in your places, with you we have a special bond. And with those of you who have not yet figured out how to do it in your countries – we will remind you, we will remind you in the most annoying way, because it is our duty to our forbears who were murdered by your participation, by your bystanders or by your ignorance.**

**We will not allow you to forget. We shall continue to be that what we have been throughout history – the conscience of so many people who have to be reminded of so many things.**

**Thank you.**