

Luxemburg

Mr President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There are some places and events that will never be lost in history; and that will always remain enshrined in the memory of mankind.

After Auschwitz, Birkenau, Bergen-Belsen, Treblinka, to name just a few, the conscience of man cannot remain the same.

This unspeakable evil defies language and understanding. It remains an ever-open wound in the moral conscience of humanity.

I am deeply moved and honoured to speak today at the site of Yad Vashem. With the most profound emotion I bow, on behalf of the Government of Luxembourg, to the memory of unspeakable horrors and its innumerable victims. I pay my deepest respect to the countless victims, known or anonymous, of nazism and facism.

The tragedy of the Jewish people was unique. An entire civilisation was uprooted and destroyed. After having contributed to the cultural and intellectual riches of Europe for centuries, two thirds of all Europe's Jews were brutally murdered in the Nazi death factories, which carried out the intentional, planned and organized extermination of millions of human beings.

In those death camps, the experience of humiliation and the negation of humanity found its most absolute expression.

Vigilence and the urgent moral appeal: "never again!" is the duty handed down to us by the memory of those men, women, and children, persecuted because of their race

or their religion, their political beliefs or their nationality. We must be vigilant against all ideologies based on hatred and exclusion, whenever and wherever they may appear.

The memory of the victims demands us equally to apprehend the horrific reasoning that led millions of human beings to be treated with utter disregard for Humanity and to be massacred in cold blood. More than sixty years on, this appalling brutality remains still incomprehensible to us.

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it,” George Santayana noted in his well-known aphorism. The quest for the causes of the Shoah, which struck the Jews of Europe so blindly and mercilessly, is in itself a denunciation of the ideologies of hate and exclusion based on anti-Semitism, racism and xenophobia which, unfortunately, still have their sad advocates in the present day.

We therefore have the moral obligation to act unconditionally to preserve the memory of the most appalling crimes in the history of mankind. This duty of memory also bestows upon us, as governments, a civic obligation of the highest order to educate, particularly the younger generations. Only this necessary examination of History enables us to draw moral and political lessons of humanism and tolerance so that it never, ever, happens again. Intolerance must be “unlearned” through education, inclusion and example.

Mr President,

The teachings of Yad Vashem, its buildings, and its architecture encompass the global memory of the Shoah.

Since its creation in 1953, Yad Vashem has become the world’s centre for the commemoration of the memory of victims of the Shoah.

Allow me to dwell just briefly on one of its manifold tasks: one of the principal missions of the Institute of Names of the Yad Vashem Memorial has been to establish

the identity of every victim of the Shoah in order to provide a history and to render a memory of all those that precisely the Nazis wanted to erase from our common memory of humanity. By conferring an individual memory to every victim of the Shoah, we thus embark on a victory against "negationism" world-wide.

Every new name is a victory against oblivion; every new name brings back the memory of a whole life.

This most noble mission is emblematic for the duty that is ours as human beings, individual citizens, governments, and as a community of nations.

Overcoming the legacy of the 2nd World War towards reconciliation, international and regional cooperation and the promotion of democratic values, human rights and fundamental freedoms, both the United Nations and the European Union are attempts at drawing lessons from the deeply traumatic experience of the death camps - "the untold sorrow" inflicted upon humanity - to use the language of the UN Charter, and the agony of war.

The valuable work of Yad Vashem and its urgent mission of transmitting our common heritage of the darkest hours of history from generation to generation and keeping the memory of the victims alive must serve as an example to us all.

Indeed, the appeal "never again" must not remain a mere moral catchphrase but should be a permanent guideline in the definition and concrete implementation of our policies.

This is how a memory turns into a memorial that serves as an act of faith for the silent but ever so forceful testimony bestowed upon us from the victims of the death camps.

Let us therefore forever heed the warning from the poet Paul Eluard who reminds us: "If the echo of their voices should fade, we shall perish."

Thank you for your attention.