

1 February 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss,
President of the 65th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Permanent Memorial to and Remembrance of the Victims of
Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade**

Thank you for the invitation to participate in today's launch of the website for the permanent memorial initiative.

Today's event is an important step in the realization of the goals that were set out in resolution 64/15 adopted by consensus by the General Assembly in 2009. The initiative has attracted global support and has become an important item on the agenda of the General Assembly.

Public awareness about the causes, consequences, lessons and legacy of the four-hundred year long slave trade are key for a better understanding of history and for educating future generations about the dangers of racism and prejudice and the universality of human rights.

Public awareness is also an important tool for fulfilling the duty of memory.

Public awareness about the tragedy of the transatlantic slave trade should also serve as an opportunity to highlight the fact that regrettably, two centuries after the official abolition of slavery, contemporary forms of slavery and slavery-like practices still persist, and hundreds of thousands of human beings are still being treated as commodities in a variety of ways.

There can be no economic, cultural or historical excuse for slavery continuing – in any form – in the 21st century.

This is why your initiative is important for historical reasons, but also, for very contemporary ones.

I wish the best of success to you, Mr Chairman, to the members of the Permanent Memorial Committee and its Advisory Board in your future endeavours in this important initiative.