

10 February 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss,
President of the 65th Session of the General Assembly,
at the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the
Victims of the Holocaust Memorial Ceremony**

Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, we remember the millions of victims of the Holocaust. We honor the survivors of the tragedy. We pay tribute to their courage and express compassion for their suffering.

“Wir fuehlten uns verlassen”.

They felt abandoned. This was the sentiment of people in Auschwitz, in Treblinka, in Sobibor, in Maidanek and other camps. So speaks Filip Mueller, a survivor in the film Shoah. They felt abandoned. These are terrible words.

The international community shall never again be accused of such infamy. As years are passing by, as direct witnesses of the Holocaust are fewer, memories threaten to vanish.

Remembrance thus takes a particular signification. Remembrance builds a rampart against denial. We must face the crude reality of crimes against humanity and strengthen our resolve for such crimes to never repeat.

The United Nations is born out of the ruins of the Second World War and the devastation of the Holocaust. The resolution adopted in 2005, which designates 27 January as the International Day of Commemoration of the Holocaust, and the resolution specifically condemning any denial of the Holocaust, adopted in 2007, recall the values enshrined in the UN Charter and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The General Assembly thus firmly expressed the necessity to face the dark chapters of the past and to pass on lessons to future generations.

We have to constantly explain what happened to our children, but also to public opinion makers and politicians. Remembrance, however, is no substitute for vigilance. “The nights are pregnant, but no one knows the day that will be born”. The forces of hatred, bigotry, racism and prejudice are still at work around the world.

We must foster a culture of peace, of tolerance and of respect. We have to stand up against the follies of genocides that have repeated throughout history. We must uphold the standards and laws put in

place by the United Nations to protect people and fight impunity for genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.

In 2005, at the World Summit, Heads of State and Governments pronounced themselves in favor of the ‘Responsibility to protect’. This is a new instrument, whose potentialities to prevent and halt such crimes still have to be fully exploited.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year’s Memorial Ceremony honors the courage and compassion of women during the Holocaust. “Horror! Horror! Horror!”. These words were written by Hélène Berr, on 15 February 1944, as one of the last entries in her Journal. The exhibition organized at the United Nations and dedicated to this young Jewish woman, who died in Bergen-Belsen, in April 1945, is a moving and powerful reminder of this tragedy.

Hélène Berr should never have had to write these words. Her life, like so many others, should never have been stolen.