

ICCA conference – draft talking points

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Session on the role of parliamentarians

- Thank you for the invitation and for the opportunity to present the work of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on preventing and combating antisemitism and other forms of discrimination and hatred.
- Overall context in Europe, a context of rising intolerance and racism. The rise in manifestations of antisemitic attacks should be considered in parallel with the rise of incidents and attacks against members and representatives of other religious faiths.

No Hate Parliamentary Alliance

- The Assembly has relentlessly condemned in past years manifestations of racism and hatred. We have had reports proposing a strategy to combat racism and intolerance in Europe, recognising neo-racism, tackling racism in the police. The Assembly also has a long-standing work cooperation with ECRI.
- I am here representing the PACE Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, which took concrete measures and decided to establish the mandate of a General rapporteur on combating racism and intolerance (Ms Milena Santerini was appointed last year) and to set up the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance.
- The Alliance, which was officially launched in January 2015, is composed of members of the Parliamentary Assembly committed to taking open, firm and pro-active stands : stand against racism, hatred and intolerance on whatever grounds and however they manifest themselves. It has 55 members to date in addition to its coordinator. Membership is also open to members of delegations having observer and partner for democracy status.
- Each member signs a charter of commitments when joining the Alliance, and commits to react to manifestations of racism, including and especially in political discourses. Alliance members are expected to be active in their home countries and to organise awareness-raising activities in their national parliaments, participate in debates in the media and in their constituencies on how to counter racist speeches and attacks.
- The Alliance held its first meeting just over a year ago. It was dedicated to combating antisemitism, following the January attacks in Paris, with the participation of Maurice Sosnowski, Chairperson of the Coordination Committee of Jewish organisations in Belgium, and Jane Braden Golay, former President of the European Union of Jewish Students. Both warned Assembly members of a changing context, with an increasing fear of identifying oneself as a Jew.

- In my view, the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance can have multiplying effects at the national level. Its members commit to be active at the local, national and European level. I look forward to the national parliamentary seminars which are due to start this year.
- Alliance members adopted a roadmap for 2016-2017 and clearly identified combating antisemitism as a priority for the coming two years.

Main elements of the report

- I am here today not only as an Assembly member and a member of the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance, but also as a rapporteur. Last week in Paris, I presented my draft report on a renewed commitment to combat antisemitism, which is an evaluation of the implementation of Assembly resolution 1563 (2007). The Committee voted unanimously in favour of the draft resolution.
- When preparing my report, I took stock of actions taken by Council of Europe member States since 2007 to prevent and combat antisemitism. I also collected data via national parliaments and tried to analyse the overall context. I looked at the growing feeling of insecurity, the weight of prejudice, legislative frameworks, the role of the media, prevention and awareness-raising campaigns, educational programmes and the role and responsibility of parliamentarians.
- Findings confirmed that the full implementation of a comprehensive anti-discrimination and antiracism legislative framework is a prerequisite for efficient action against antisemitism. Comprehensive legislative often exists, but its implementation can remain limited.
- In the draft resolution, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States to make the public denial, trivialisation, justification or praise of the Holocaust (Shoah), of crimes of genocide and of crimes against humanity a criminal offence. It also calls on making a motive based on race, colour or religion an aggravating factor to a criminal offence and ensuring the prosecution of political figures and parties for antisemitic statements.
- The continuation of programmes for Holocaust teaching and remembrance is essential for the prevention of antisemitism. We have to prevent ignorance and react to indifference to the Holocaust.
- Specific measures against hate speech, including online, should be taken, in cooperation with internet service providers and social media.
- Focus should also be brought to building trust with national authorities so as to encourage the reporting of antisemitic attacks and hate crimes with the provision of specific training to police officers. I also propose the launch of information campaigns on how to report hate crimes.

Role and responsibility of parliamentarians

- I am convinced that parliamentarians can play an important role in combating intolerance and hatred, I would not be here otherwise. They can raise awareness on the existence and the nature of antisemitism and discuss with their constituencies.
- By publicly condemning manifestations of antisemitism and intervening in the media, parliamentarians can contribute to changing mindsets. Parliamentarians can also launch awareness-raising campaigns and lead by example. They call for and encourage inter-faith dialogue, hold hearings and promote mutual respect and understanding.
- They have a responsibility to show their commitment and political leadership for the protection of human rights. They can play an important role for the prevention of antisemitism by systematically and publicly condemning antisemitic attacks and discourses.
- It is in their role as lawmakers that parliamentarians can have the biggest impact, by ensuring the national legislative framework to prevent and combat discrimination is comprehensive. Parliamentarians should ensure that antisemitic hate crimes are in relevant hate crime legislation and follow-up on its implementation.
- I very much welcome the creation of structures such as the ICCA or the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance which can help us in coordinating actions and hope they will soon have national counterparts in all member States.
- Parliamentarians need to show strong political leadership and publicly and actively condemn manifestations of antisemitism. I consider it our duty. The commitment of each of us can already contribute to making a difference at the national level.