

Remarks by Peter Launsky -Tieffenthal
Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information
at the opening of
“A Remembrance of the Holocaust in Hungary: 70th Anniversary Exhibition”
Thursday, 23 January 2014, 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
First floor, Conference Building

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends;

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the United Nations this evening. I would like to thank the organizers of the event: the Permanent Mission of Hungary to the United Nations, the Hungarian American Coalition, the Carl Lutz Foundation, the Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice and The Hungary Initiatives Foundation for inviting me to speak on this important occasion.

I am sorry to hear that Mr. György Vámos President, Carl Lutz Foundation, is unwell and unable to be with us tonight. I wish him a speedy recovery.

Hungary has been a valued partner of the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme since its inception in 2006. Ambassador Kőrösi, it is gratifying that our work together continues to flourish.

I would also like to take a moment to pay tribute to the late Congressman Tom Lantos, a Holocaust survivor and dedicated statesman. His commitment to Holocaust remembrance and the promotion of human rights lives on through the work of the foundation established in his name, led by his wife Annette, and daughter Katrina, who lovingly delivered a statement on behalf of her father at our Holocaust Memorial Ceremony in 2008.

Tonight we remember the hundreds of thousands of Jews in Hungary who were murdered in the death camps or conscripted into forced labour, all of whom suffered under harsh conditions and unjust racial laws during the Holocaust.

As much as the Holocaust has been studied and analyzed, there are still aspects that are not yet clear to all concerned. Seventy years later, it is all the more important that the facts concerning this unprecedented genocidal action come to light, that we learn from them and that we apply that knowledge.

I cannot emphasize this point too much. We live in an age where declared wars between sovereign states thankfully are reduced in number and virtually fading away. But partisan civil strife often runs rampant, fueled by the kind of religious and ethnic-based enmity that lay at the heart of the Holocaust itself. It is not a moment too late to be learning and understanding all that we can.

We are also seeing feelings of enmity spill over from inside one nation state into others. Armies do not need to cross borders in order for blood to be shed, families broken apart and lives to be ruined. Hatred passing across borders can accomplish the same ends.

What I have just stated is, in a nutshell, a guiding rationale of the Outreach Programme that the United Nations has spearheaded concerning the Holocaust and its lessons.

Operating under the auspices of my Department, the Holocaust Programme works closely with survivors so that their stories are told, and heeded as a warning of the consequences of anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination. It has developed an international network of civil society partners and a multifaceted platform that includes educational materials, special events, teacher training, student workshops, and leads this week of commemorative events all around the world.

The Programme draws out the links between the United Nations seminal role of protecting human rights and helping to prevent genocide, and the need for a world where not just nations but people from all backgrounds and persuasions are united in mutual respect and striving for justice and the common good.

I hope that you are able to join us for a number of events that will take place here at the United Nations New York Headquarters, and which began this morning with the Department of Public Information's NGO briefing on the 70th anniversary of the deportation and murder of Jews in Hungary. The main event of course is next Monday, when we hold the annual Holocaust Memorial Ceremony in the General Assembly Hall, with Steven Spielberg as keynote speaker. This will be followed by an exhibition on the March of the Living on Tuesday and a film screening on Wednesday. The full calendar of events with registration information is available on the table. I look forward to seeing you all again.

Thank you.

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