

Concluding Statements

Concluding Statement

Mr. Miles Lerman
CHAIRMAN,
UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL COUNCIL

Thank you. Ambassadors, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are nearing the end of this extraordinary conference on Holocaust-Era Assets. We have heard many speakers; we have listened to impassioned pleas; we have been moved; we have been called to action. Indeed, much has been accomplished – yet so much more remains to be done.

As I stated before, the success of this conference will ultimately be judged by the manner in which every nation here will assume its own obligation towards an ongoing, intensive program of Holocaust Education.

History will judge all of our nations by the demonstrated degree of willingness to confront the truth about our own past. We will be judged on how diligently we will pursue efforts to make our archives available for scholarly research. Without these archival records, the full story of the Holocaust and all related issues cannot be told.

The story we will convey to future generations must be factual and fully documented. Otherwise, it will not withstand the test of history.

But there are other critical issues that I want to address this morning.

I believe all of us should be concerned with the recent phenomenon that is arising as a result of increased attention to Holocaust assets. I am referring to the rise of anti-Semitism in certain European countries. So far the drummers of hate are still somewhat subdued. They seem to come in the form of a whisper campaign. But remembrance teaches us that we cannot ignore or take lightly early signs of anti-Semitism.

One manifestation of this phenomenon appears to be taking place in Switzerland.

On November 5, 1998, Switzerland's Federal Commission Against Racism reported that, "Latent anti-Semitism is again being

increasingly expressed in public word and deed.” The Commission reports that, “Comments from Swiss politicians helped make anti-Semitism socially acceptable.” Again this fact is highly disturbing.

This resurgence of anti-Semitic sentiments seemed to be explained as a reaction to the negotiated financial compensation with some of the Swiss banks.

Should this phenomenon continue, we should keep in mind that such retaliatory anti-Semitism will only compound the problems that this conference is trying to address.

Let it come forward from here to all concerned that the days when Jews were afraid to speak up to defend their rights are gone and will never return again.

It is essential that we recognize that the debate, in which we are now engaged, is not only about assets, but it is about what is right and what is wrong and what is just and what is unjust.

The moral aspect of this debate is perhaps more important than the material consequences.

There is another matter that I must bring to your attention. It is eloquently expressed in the letter that appears in your packet that was written by David Harris, the Director of the American Jewish Committee, regarding the identification and preservation of the places of martyrdom throughout Europe.

Some countries are dedicated to the task to preserve these sites; in others, little or no effort is made.

In some countries, legislation exists to protect these sites; in others, there is no protection whatsoever.

It is imperative to prevail upon the nations that have failed to preserve and protect their sacred sites, that they must ensure that these places remain as reminders of the horrible crimes of a half century ago. If we are to pursue an intensive program of Holocaust education and remembrance, these sites must be preserved and they must become our eternal witnesses to a horrid past.

As you can see, Ladies and Gentlemen, we are ending our conference with great accomplishments – but even greater challenges, much in the way of education, research and preservation remains to be done, but I feel hopeful that with goodwill and true understanding of what is at stake for future generations, we will succeed in our efforts.

Thank you.

Concluding Statement AMERICAN GATHERING OF JEWISH HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

**By Mr. Benjamin Meed
HEAD OF DELEGATION**

Mr. Chairman Abner Mikva, thank you for your kind introduction.

As we are about to conclude this historic conference, I would like, on behalf of the survivor community, to express our appreciation especially to Stuart Eizenstat and Miles Lerman for bringing together such a distinguished international gathering.

In the last four days much good will was expressed and we are grateful. There were many highlights, many expressions of solidarity with the victims. The aim of the conference was to unite us for future activities and we hope this was achieved. A better understanding of what the Holocaust did to our people.

Although this conference dealt mostly with pragmatic issues, Holocaust survivors must never allow to forget the enormity of the catastrophe which befell especially our Jewish people and remember the murder of six million European Jews. We realize that we will never learn the enormity of our losses, but we must demand that justice and morality be the guidelines in future deliberations.

I am here together with my fellow officers of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors. As Americans we feel proud that under the seal of the United States, under the leadership of America, this conference was organized and this work will continue. We are working very closely with the Israeli delegation, with whom we have special bonds. In the field of education we work very closely with Yad Vashem in Jerusalem and Lochamei Hageta'ot in Nahariya.

We were inspired by many people, but personally, for me were the remarks by our Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. While she spoke and summoned us to remember, I could not help but think of my

own family murdered in the Holocaust, and about so many Jewish children never given a chance of growing up and doing so much for society and humanity.

The aims of the Holocaust survivors in all their years after liberation can be summed up in three objectives: our responsibility to **commemorate, document and educate**. To the end of our lives we will continue to bear witness.

As we rebuilt our lives in this country, in the State of Israel and countries throughout the world, survivors took upon themselves the responsibility of not letting the world forget. In the last fifteen years the American Gathering created, under the leadership of Vladka Meed, the acclaimed program of education of the Holocaust and Resistance. Six hundred seventeen alumni from throughout the country are today teaching nationwide about Holocaust and Resistance.

We are pleased that the flame of education, which we survivors ignited and which we would like to instill in our future generations, has today become the most important theme. The Conference and assets also had to become the platform of remembrance, this time, not only by survivors, but by countries worldwide. We are grateful to the State Department, under the leadership of Under Secretary Stuart Eizenstat, and Miles Lerman, the chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, as well as all representatives of Yad Vashem of the State of Israel and we are commending their goals.

Naturally, those who lived through that period have a special sensitivity and passion, and are bound by Remembrance. Most important to us survivors is the subject of Remembrance. What should be remembered is that truth and morality must be our guide.

We are grateful that today, the Days of Remembrance is officially observed in the United States as a full week of remembrance. Hundreds of thousands of people annually remember the Holocaust through these observances.

Many institutions in the United States did help in documenting the Holocaust through eyewitnesses and we are grateful to them. But the official documentation of Holocaust survivors in the United States is the National Registry of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, which was, and is being, compiled jointly by the American Gathering and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Our records and data base today already represent more than 120,000 Holocaust survivors and their families. This work is of the utmost importance and we must continue with it. Our goal is that every living survivor, as well as those who passed away, in the United States

should have his or her record, including the family, recorded. History will need this documentation. Although it is work we are doing for more than twenty years, we hope it will continue as a major priority of our activities. We need, for all this, cooperation from Holocaust survivors and their descendants.

We hope that education will become now the tool of erasing ignorance and preparing new generations free of hatred and bigotry.

Concluding Statement BELARUS

By Vladimir Adamushko
HEAD OF DELEGATION

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Belarus allow me to thank the Conference hosts for their invitation to participate in it, for their hospitality, good organization and conditions of our work.

The problems viewed at this conference are of great importance for the mankind. The cooperation and mutual understanding of nations depend greatly on how fairly they are going to be resolved.

Speaking at the opening of our conference Secretary of State Madeleine Albright precisely defined the Holocaust as history's most monstrous crime. This "monster" cost more than 2.5 mln. lives to my small country in the center of Europe. Nearly 800 thousand of the victims were Jews, which accounts for 1/7 of the total Holocaust victims.

Regrettably, the problems of the Holocaust to the east of Poland have been hardly touched upon at this Conference.

Immediately after the London Conference we in Belarus came back to the problem of Nazi gold: we thoroughly studied documents in our national archives, as well as in those of Germany and Russia.

Our research resulted in the collection of documents "Nazi Gold from Belarus" published in September, 1998, which had included 46 documents containing data on gold, silver and other jewelry confiscated by the Nazis from the population of Belarus and sent to the Reich.

Out of the book's 410 pages, 185 pages are devoted to the documented lists of persons whose jewelry had been confiscated by the Nazis. They are Belarusians and Jews, Russians and Poles, Ukrainians and Tartars, and people of other nationalities.

But these lists of looted valuables have one discrepancy. Jews make up only 5 percent in them, though Belarus was a major center of Jewish pale in the former Soviet Union. The fact is that only few Jews could get into these lists. The Holocaust victims were in another list.

Nearly 800 thousand Jews were killed in more than 200 ghettos in Belarus, among them almost 50 thousand Jews from various European countries. Jews were killed 'wholesale'. All at once. They were robbed of anything: documents, valuables, personal belongings, gold, silver and the most dear thing - the life itself. The archival documents prove it.

It's worth noting that the research included documents and materials dealing mainly with the central part of Belarus (during the Nazi occupation it formed the General Region of Byelorussia incorporated into the Ostland Reichkommissariat) which accounts for a quarter of today's territory of the country. The remaining part of the Belarusian territory was under the authority of the military occupation administration of the Center Army Group Rear and the General Regions of Bialostok and Lithuania. Therefore, the real number of citizens whose jewelry was confiscated by the Nazis is much larger.

And the documentary database was far from being complete. A part of archives on this problem was either destroyed or sometimes inaccessible for researchers on other reasons. We present here only the documents which our researchers could find by fragments and which apply to non-monetary gold, or to be more exact, the gold confiscated from the Belarusian citizens.

Distinguished Delegates,

Today, due to economic reasons, my country cannot become a donor to the International Fund for Needy Victims of Nazi Persecution. Unfortunately, it needs assistance itself due to various reasons, the Chernobyl disaster among them, with its consequences continuing to affect nearly half the country's territory for many years to come.

We propose to make within the International Fund for Needy Victims of Nazi Persecution a special list of states that suffered most during the Holocaust era and cannot become the Fund's donors yet but whose Holocaust victims could be assisted through this Fund. Belarus is among the European countries which suffered the heaviest losses from Nazism. Its people, Nazi victims, both Jews and non-Jews, hope that their country will be included into the group states which are to be compensated for their confiscated assets.

There are more than 400 persons among them whose names had been or are about to be commemorated in Jerusalem's Avenue of the Righteous Amongst the Nations.

We believe and hope that our research will be taken into account as well when sealing the final fate of Nazi non-monetary gold.

We hope for a just solution of this problem. Thank you.

Concluding Statement

BULGARIA

By Ambassador Philip Dimitrov
HEAD OF DELEGATION

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like first to thank, on the behalf of the Bulgarian delegation, all who worked hard to make this conference possible. Permit me to thank personally Secretary Eizenstat for his efforts and for his efficiency.

Restitution is not merely an economic but mainly a moral issue. It is generally accepted that crime and violence should not and will not be tolerated to benefit anyone. Restitution is a – if not *the* – practical way to make this perfectly clear.

I cannot agree with people who think that what has been said and done about the Holocaust until now is enough. We need to protect our world from the possibility of any new outburst of totalitarian savagery, and memory is one of the most important factors in this respect. The memory of the Holocaust should be kept alive. The sufferings of the Jewish people who were systematically tortured and industrially slaughtered represent the most blatant and terrifying example of what tyranny and teaching of hatred brought to people in the twentieth century. And it is not surprising that quite a few issues directly deriving from the Holocaust could be raised only now when the other poisonous social structure – communism – fell.

The need to recall and discuss the Holocaust is not a matter of fashion, but of an intrinsic human necessity which should be respected, supported and encouraged not only in memory of the past but for the sake of the future as well.

For obvious reasons, the contribution of my delegation to the work of this Conference is very modest. Fortunately, Bulgaria does not face most of the problems that are being discussed here. The Bulgarians, like the Danes, took a firm stand in support of their Jewish compatriots during the war. Bulgaria was the only country in Hitler-dominated wartime Europe which emerged from the war with more Jews living in it

than before the war, and managed to save fifty thousand human beings from deportation to the death camps. This was only achieved due to the combined and sustained efforts of the State Institutions (Parliament and King), the Church, the intellectuals of different trends of thought and the common people who went out into the streets. It is true that the Bulgarian nation could not save the Jews from Thrace and Macedonia, and this is painful indeed. But the Jews in Bulgaria, even when they suffered the humiliation of yellow stars and labor camps, knew that this was the only way to save them from deportation and that when the Nazi pressure was over, their position would be restored. Most of the Bulgarian Jews later chose to leave post-war Bulgaria and it was then that a good part of their property was robbed by the communist regime.

However, one thing that gives me courage for the future of my nation is the awareness that even now there are thousands of Bulgarian-born Jews living in the State of Israel and elsewhere, who keep on mentioning Bulgaria in their prayers.

In fact, my country has considerable experience with restitution of Jewish (as well as every other) property robbed by the communist regime and we are ready to share this experience with respect to problems that can occur in such complicated procedures.

Weekend Jewish schools in Bulgaria were started soon after the fall of the Berlin wall and last fall a full-time Jewish school was established in Sofia with the generous assistance of the Lauder Foundation.

The University of Sofia has already introduced Jewish Studies into its curriculum, and steps are being taken to increase the amount of data on the Holocaust in the curriculum of the public high schools. Naturally, I would like to use the opportunity of this Conference to express our openness to exchange of experience in these matters as well.

I would also like to express the support of my delegation to the proposal for measures aimed at the full preservation of sites of the Holocaust. These ugly monuments of despicable inhumanity should not be destroyed. Their existence is a weapon in the fight for human memory, i.e., for human conscience. We should not deprive ourselves of this weapon as long as there are still voices saying that the story of the Holocaust is a bit exaggerated.

Concluding Statement CANADA

**By Mr. Howard Strauss
HEAD OF DELEGATION**

Mr. Chairman, hosts, fellow delegates:

As the Conference draws to a close, we join others who have spoken to congratulate the U.S. authorities on their initiative in convening this Conference. It was a success by any standard.

Mr. Chairman, the ratio of the holocaust survivor community in Canada to the Canadian Jewish population is higher than that of any other country in the world, except Israel. The Conference has, therefore, a special importance for us.

Canada has opened its holocaust-era national archives to the public. Canadian insurance companies are in the process of reviewing their holocaust-era files. Bank of Canada records have been reviewed both internally and by outside experts. The Canadian Art Museums Directors Organization fully supports the principle of return of Holocaust Era Assets, and is working on guidelines similar to the ones discussed here.

Our education facilities provide cutting edge holocaust education programs: a chair has been dedicated to holocaust studies at a major university, courses are offered at all levels, holocaust memorial museums have been established in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver. An international symposium on hate on the Internet took place in Canada in 1997. A follow-up international conference will take place in Canada in March of next year.

Through our written contributions and oral participation, we have sought to provide others attending this Conference with the benefit of our experience. And we, in turn, have benefited from the insights offered by colleagues.

We will complete the work begun in Canada. We will also continue to contribute what we can at the international level.

It is too late for the many who have died, but we can provide a small measure of justice to their memory and to the survivors. And, we can, through education, try to save our children from reliving their horrors.

We should do it because it is the right thing to do. Thank you.

Concluding Statement CZECH REPUBLIC

**By Mr. Jiri Sitrler
HEAD OF DELEGATION**

Ladies and gentlemen,

This conference has not been summoned to account for successes; it was intended to stimulate a deeper international debate on Holocaust era assets.

In our country, we take part in the debate, and support the creation of diverse committees, task forces, and funds for victims. Nevertheless, I have a feeling that the overflow of memorandums, committees, and press declarations in the last years and months was sometimes self-purposed. I will tell you why I believe so.

We sometimes ask our citizens who have survived the horrors of the Holocaust about their opinion on international foundations that are being announced in the headlines of the world press. Usually they answer politely that they welcome the current discussion, nevertheless, none of the Czech Jews or Roma has ever received a dollar from these funds. I am sure it will happen soon, but still, more agility would not hurt.

Victims who survived and stayed in Czechoslovakia or other countries of the Central and Eastern Europe were de facto excluded from the compensation remedies arranged between the Allies and the German government. We actually do not know the reason for this. The argument that they lived in a communist country is not clear – it meant that they needed the money even more. Moreover, no arguments ever prevented retirement payments to ex-members of the Nazi army. Well, be it as it may, the lost decades are not to come back. But it is the reason why international community should focus much more on the real situation of the Nazi victims in Central and Eastern Europe, not on the virtual world of statements, memorandums, moralizing, and press conferences.

Of course, there is a lot to do in my own country too. That is why the Czech Republic established a governmental committee chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister. We know that the results of its work will be more important than the intentions and plans.

However, you could allow me to share with you some of our good experiences. As waiting for a compensation or humanitarian aid from abroad seemed to take too long, in 1994 the Czech Parliament adopted an act providing financial aid to the Nazi victims. By this day, 55 million dollars were distributed from a Czech government agency, without any request for its operating budget increase.

In December 1997, the so-called 'Czech-German Fund for the Future' was established. The Czech share is 17 million dollars while the German one is 93 million dollars. 53 million dollars out of this amount is to be handed directly to the victims. Both the Czech and the German members of the board of administrators and of the supervisory board of the Czech-German Fund fulfill their job for free.

We are proud that funds in which Czech side is participating are running smoothly and inexpensively and I hope that you will forgive me mentioning this so much. After all, this is the only aid that the Czech victims of Nazism have ever seen. They rightly hope that it was not the last one. We can show to all the attorneys, members of boards and others involved in this issue how things worked out so swiftly and without any expensive salaries and fees. Of course, only if they would like to see something so strange.

Much more important issue is to make everybody see what the victims of Nazism from Central and Eastern European countries think. It is no surprise that we can find representatives of Roma and Jews among the Czech delegates. We do not want them to function only as a matter of the debate. We wish them to be involved in solving the problems concerning them most, not only in our country, but also in appropriate international councils. It is still not that way. Therefore, I highly appreciate the speech given yesterday by the representative of the American Jewish Committee who addressed this problem.

The Washington conference gave us the opportunity to discuss all these issues in an open and frank manner. I would like to thank all the organizers who made it possible, especially Judge Abner Mikva, Undersecretary Stuart Eizenstat and Miles Lerman, Chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council.

Several decades ago we were united in the battle against Nazism. Now we should become allies in fighting its consequences. We can sure teach each other a lot in that. Thank you very much for your interest and patience.

Concluding Statement FRANCE

By Ambassador Louis Amigues
HEAD OF DELEGATION

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to join my colleagues in thanking the organizers of this conference. These three days were full of exchanges on the tragic subject of the looting of assets during the Holocaust. They have allowed all the participants, I hope, to better understand what happened during that period and to take the necessary steps toward fulfilling our duty to remember.

This final speech gives me an opportunity to reaffirm the desire of the highest authorities of my country to shed all possible light on this painful aspect of our history.

In 1995, President Chirac indicated his concern for seeing France fulfill its duties of remembrance and history through the recognition of the horror and tragedy that struck the Jews of France in the form of the Holocaust ordained by the Nazi occupier and implemented by the Vichy government. Just a few days ago, on November 28, the Prime Minister reaffirmed this determination before the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions of France.

I want to quote the following passage from his speech:

"The test of truth is always delicate. Nevertheless it remains indispensable. A nation always benefits from a clear-minded look at its past, including its darker pages. That is why, after approving without reservations the declarations of the President of the Republic with regard to the anti-Semitic crimes of the Vichy regime, I myself expressed the same sentiment." And: "You have legitimately stressed the concerns of the Jews of France regarding the question of looted assets. Such expectations are well founded. It is normal for those who

were the victims of this unprecedented tragedy – the Shoah – to demand rights that are indeed theirs."

There cannot be the slightest doubt as to France's will.

Indeed, it has resulted in the establishment of the Commission headed by Mr. Jean Mattéoli, Chairman of the Economic and Social Council. Several of its members are part of our delegation, notably its Vice President, Professor Steg, who is also president of the Universal Israelite Alliance. They had an opportunity to talk about their work so I will not go back into the details, but I do want to underscore the following points:

The work being accomplished is considerable, exceptionally wide-ranging, and is mobilizing all the administrations and bodies concerned to investigate all possible sources. It is being carried out with determination and total independence on the part of Commissioners.

The government has taken the necessary measures, both in financial terms and in terms of staff, to complete this enormous task by the end of 1999. If necessary, its resources will be increased in order to meet this goal.

The results of this investigation will be accompanied by proposals regarding the nature and modalities of reparations that seem justified. The government will then make the decisions it deems necessary.

As you can see, France's approach is thus extremely ambitious. It is also specific, given that France – and first and foremost its Jewish community – was a victim of Nazi looting. As soon as the legitimate Republic was re-established, our country systematically began making restitutions in all areas: financial assets, works of art, real estate, industrial and commercial assets and so on. The work under way will make it possible to very precisely identify the extent of the sizable restitutions that have already been made and to determine those that were unable to be made.

Finally, this approach is directed first and foremost toward France's Jewish community. We favor the concept of individual restitution, despite the considerable work it entails. This legal concept, which differs from the collective and communitarian treatment that may be current elsewhere, allows us to respond specifically to the claims made by our fellow citizens. To this end, the Prime Minister has just approved the creation of a body responsible for examining individual claims by the victims of anti-Semitic measures and their heirs.

That does not prevent us from taking part in the duty to pursue remembrance and education at the international level, as shown by our contribution of some 20 million francs to the activities of the international fund assisting the victims of Nazi persecution.

Thank you for your attention.

Concluding Statement GERMANY

By Ambassador Professor Tono Eitel
HEAD OF DELEGATION

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Judge Mikva, for the understanding and impartiality with which you have conducted the conference over the past days. We are sure that your balanced judgment will also be brought to bear in your summary, which will contain your findings about our work. We shall study it with the greatest interest and with the greatest respect and sympathy for you personally, Mr. Chairman, and for the cause of the conference.

I thank the State Department, Ambassador Eizenstat, and the Holocaust Memorial Museum, Mr. Lerman, for their hospitality.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The subjects with which we have been dealing over these days are very difficult for everyone in this room. They are and they will remain a source of shame for Germans. The liberation of Auschwitz on January 27, 1945, is a day of remembrance in Germany. We also commemorate Kristallnacht, the night of the pogrom on November 9, 1938, when synagogues were burned. This was a turning point in the history of the persecution and plundering of German Jews. On the sixtieth anniversary of that event, Federal President Roman Herzog, said in a Berlin synagogue:

The night of November 9 to 10, 1938, was one of the most terrible and disgraceful moments in German history. It was a slap in the face of humanity and civilization.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Immediately after the end of the war, it was clear to everybody that there could never be complete compensation for the immense

suffering, both human and material, which the Hitler regime had brought upon the world. Germany nevertheless endeavored to do what it could at the time. Nazi victims included Jews, politically and religiously persecuted persons, and also Sinti and Roma, whose terrible suffering was so vividly brought to life by the remarkable intervention of the President of the International Romani Union.

Today, Germany can look back on nearly fifty years of compensation totaling more than 100 billion German marks, and annual payments of 1.7 billion German marks continue to be made. This corresponds to more than 60 billion dollars plus continuing annual payments of 1 billion dollars.

In Germany, the restitution of assets belonging to Nazi victims began immediately after the war. Prior to the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949, the victorious powers had already done a considerable amount of work to right the wrongs and give back to the victims what belonged to them. The Federal Republic of Germany carried on where the Allies had left off. Movable and immovable assets that could be identified as having belonged to victims of Nazi persecution were returned to survivors, to their heirs, or to successor organizations. Compensation was paid for material assets that could no longer be restituted. This compensation also covered cases where there was no successor. These assets were dealt with in global agreements with the Jewish Claims Conference. Our policy of restitution and compensation has been developed over the years in constant dialogue with the Allies, with the successor organizations set up by survivors and trusted by everyone involved, and also with the State of Israel.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to make a few comments on the main subjects of our conference.

On the issue of Nazi gold, we regret to admit that the Reichsbank files concerning the victims' gold were, based on the documents available, divided up according to the then prevailing standards and ultimately lost 25 years ago. It seems their political and historical significance was not properly understood. Documentation is available to you on this regrettable loss.

The German Government welcomes and supports efforts by German and other European insurance companies to pursue in the International Commission the question of insurance policies held by Nazi victims that were not paid out. I would like to emphasize at this point that it was the declared intention of the Hitler regime to channel all

Jewish assets to the state or one of its organizations. That policy also applied to insurance claims. If the victims did not collect on such policies, their surrender value was confiscated by the Reich Treasury, that is, by the tax offices. After the war, these insurance policies became part of German compensation payments. The International Commission should therefore be concerned only with insurance claims which, for whatever reason, were not stolen by the Nazis, or, in rare cases, for which no compensation was paid.

As far as works of art are concerned, the German Government's position is clear, and I am sure that this can be confirmed by representatives of the Conference on Jewish Claims against Germany. Any work of art that belonged to a victim of the Nazis and may be still in the possession of the German Government, will be returned to the survivors or given to their successors. If neither victims nor successors can be traced, the work will be handed over to the Jewish Claims Conference. I can assure you that this policy will also apply to any works of art taken out of Germany as individual or collective war booty which will be returned to my country in the future. We expect that binding and unequivocal treaty obligations will be honored. We very much welcome efforts by European museums and other bodies to track down works of art whose provenance is in doubt and to find their former owners.

That is the policy the German Government applies not only in cases of art works but also in the area of libraries and archival documents belonging to Nazi victims.

Please allow me a word on the land formerly owned by Jewish communities and the victims of the Nazis. After reunification in 1990, the Government took over responsibility for handling open claims in the same manner as had been practiced to date, i.e., with a clear preference for returning such assets. Of course, fifty years after the end of the war, it is much more difficult to resolve those kinds of questions when possession has changed several times. We are confident that this work can soon be brought to a satisfactory conclusion in close and trustful cooperation with the Claims Conference.

The subject of Holocaust remembrance also looks ahead to our common future. In Germany, knowledge of the Third Reich and its crimes is an established part of all school curricula. We have acquainted you with our wide-ranging educational materials. Teaching tolerance and historical awareness also includes visits to memorial sites, especially to former concentration camps. When visiting a former concentration camp in Germany, one always encounters young Germans.

We believe that international cooperation on Holocaust remembrance is essential to strengthening a common international attitude towards crimes such as racism and anti-Semitism. It is in this spirit that we welcome the Swiss Government's proposal to host a governmental conference on the fight against the use of the Internet for racist, anti-Semitic or hate purposes.

We consider it important and useful to make available our experience and wide range of German teaching materials to other countries for use in their curricular development.

Allow me to close by again quoting President Herzog:

No community, no society, and no state can live without remembrance. Living without remembrance means living without identity and orientation. Remembrance must be passed on, for the sake of the victims, but also for our own sake. Anyone who wants to be honest must face up to his entire history, history which, in both its good and its evil aspects, makes up the identity of our people.

Remembrance - when we talk of remembrance in the context of the Nazi era, we mean, above all, remembrance of the victims. But it also signifies remembrance of the crimes and the criminals. It is our responsibility to refute anyone who claims that being a human depends on race or origin, convictions or beliefs, health or ability.

Thank you very much.

Concluding Statement ISRAEL

By Mr. Yaakov Levy
DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL,
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

On behalf of the Israeli Delegation, I wish to express appreciation to all of you who have participated in this Conference; special appreciation is due to the United States, under whose auspices we are convening, in particular to Under-Secretary of State Stuart Eizenstat and his dedicated staff, who worked diligently in preparing and implementing the Conference.

Mr. Chairman: Not all the victims were Jews, but all Jews were victims. Following the defeat of the Nazis, a majority of Holocaust survivors immigrated to Israel, where they and their families built their lives anew. The State of Israel sees itself as the central representative of the survivors and their offspring and is dedicated to achieving justice on their behalf and to the remembrance of the Shoah.

The matter of Jewish assets is not merely a material issue; it is a moral imperative. "Thou shalt not steal" appears in the same Decalogue with the injunction against murder. There is no adequate compensation for the loss of life, but justice must be sought for the Jewish communities and individuals that were despoiled.

Compensation must also be sought for the men and women turned into slave laborers, whose bodies were violated for profit. All civilized nations outlaw slavery and whomever exploits slave labor must provide reparations for this heinous crime.

We support the adoption of a universal principle of restitution of communal property. The obligation of restituting private property to its rightful owners or to their descendents is of paramount importance. If restitution is not possible, adequate compensation should be made.

Individuals and institutions who acquired looted property should pay restitution. Financial institutions such as banks and insurance companies should accept responsibility for their Holocaust era clients. This also applies to those who acquired art works and ritual objects

looted from Jewish homes and synagogues. The original owners have an indisputable claim to what is rightfully theirs, even though these items may have passed through a number of hands.

We welcome the openness and the cooperation of the countries researching the facts regarding property looted during the Holocaust. We note with satisfaction that many countries have established commissions to investigate their own past. We urge all countries, groups, financial institutions and individuals to allow immediate and unrestricted access to all archival and state archive materials relevant to the period.

We welcome the establishment of the International Commission on Holocaust Era Claims and look forward to its equitable resolution of all outstanding Holocaust era claims.

The World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO) is the umbrella organization representing the Jewish people, in close coordination with the State of Israel, in matters of restitution.

It is imperative that the International Task Force on Holocaust Education, Research and Remembrance succeed in promoting worldwide awareness of the horrors of the Holocaust and help combat racism, anti-Semitism, Holocaust denial and ethnic hatred.

The State of Israel, together with Yad Vashem, in cooperation with Jewish communities worldwide and all other relevant institutions, will work to effect the widest dissemination of knowledge about the Holocaust, its prelude, its aftermath and its lessons for all humanity.

Many of the Speakers were cognizant of the need to focus on the high moral ground of maintaining the memory of the Holocaust and to promote educational projects. The need to put a face and a name on every victim, as well as to impart the universal lessons of the Shoah, will forever remain a primary goal for us all. At the same time, it is vital that we focus on the plight of the survivors among us, and of their descendants. The need for expeditious material compensation is of paramount importance during the survivors' lifetime. The swift implementation of all legitimate claims of the survivors is the very basis for maintaining a high moral ground struck during these days.

This Conference is not the conclusion of the process. The issue of Jewish assets will remain on the World's agenda until just solutions are found.

To this end, we urge further gatherings and consultations in the months and year to come.

The State of Israel commits itself to full cooperation with all governments and non-governmental organizations in an effort to uncover the truth, promote humanitarian solidarity and accord justice to the victims of the Holocaust and their heirs.

"Tzedek Tzedek Tirdof"

"Justice, justice, thou shall seek....."

Concluding Statement

REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

By Mr. Vladimir Naumovski
HEAD OF DELEGATION

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There are documents on the presence of Jews in Macedonia from the 6th century B.C., who came here from Persia. Those comprise the first Jewish settlements in Europe. The Diaspora brought masses of other Jews (during Alexander the Great, and the Roman Empire), who are known as Romaniots. Many known families remained in Macedonia until the Holocaust. The most numerous population and the culture came from Spain and Portugal (1492 and 1498 respectively), bringing the highest level of civilization and culture in these territories. We always stress the fact that in Macedonia, the Jews brought with themselves the Bible, Judaism, Christianity, the alphabet and part of the Jewish fate. All of the Judaism in Macedonia has gone with the Holocaust. The last 7148 Macedonian Jews, were arrested and gathered by the Bulgarian Army on March 11, 1943, and deported to Treblinka, where they were exterminated. This number comprise 98% of the Jewish population at that time, which rate is incomparable with any other, except maybe in Northern Greece (Aegean Macedonia) and Trakia. Very few survivors have joined the Resistance movement, but also many of them have lost their lives on the battles. Documents about the history of the Macedonian Holocaust are collected by the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the Macedonian Archives. As the SS Nazi troops stormed through former Yugoslavia (April 6, 1941) to invade Greece, they delivered most of the Macedonian territories to the Bulgarian occupation forces who remained in those territories until the end of the World War II 1945. A few months just before the occupation, the Bulgarian government issued the "Law for Protection of the Nation" signed by the King Boris III on January 21, 1941, and it was immediately operative in Macedonia.

On this occasion I would like to point out that according to the claim of Riebbentrop (Nazi-German Minister of Foreign Affairs), King Boris III approved initial deportation of 20,000 Jews to the Nazi -

concentration camps, mainly persons from the occupied territories, communists or socialists. On March 11, 1943 all Jews from Macedonia were gathered on the temporary concentration camp "Monopol" in Skopje. The conditions of living there were horrible, including minimal food and water, with no bathroom and toilette, with no heating in an exceptionally severe winter. Towards the end of March and the beginning of April 1943, three convoys with Jews were deported to Treblinka. In each carriage without windows there were around 80 persons, in standing position. Not a single person came back from Treblinka. In Bulgaria, although many of the Jews were arrested and 5000 died during the arrest and in the labor camps, were spared from deportation and extermination, thanks mainly to the organized protests of the Bulgarian people and ethnic Macedonians, the Orthodox Church and some MPs. Many ethnic Macedonians took the first initiative and had the crucial part in the organization and participation of the protests (as stated by the Bulgarian writers Harry Nisimov and Aaron Assa):..."For hundreds of years the Macedonian and Jewish peoples have lived together as brothers in misfortunes, suffering and destiny. We have the same enemies. Therefore our struggle against them should be identical (The Macedonian Liberation Front, end of 1942) ... There is indisputable evidence that several prominent members of the Macedonian movement in Bulgaria, in the town of Kjustendil to be precise, played a decisive role in saving Bulgarian Jews from extermination in Poland... "(Aaron Assa). The anti-Semitism and anti-Macedonism are practiced in the certain countries for centuries. The very basic principles of moral and social ecology are treaded constantly mainly in the same European countries. We do believe in the hope of U.S. Sen. Daniel Inouye (D--Hawaii), "The Chief Rabbi" in U.S. Senate and Congress, that the concentration camps and Holocaust will not happened again; to have this security "the vigilance is not enough, we need active participation", said the U.S. Sen. Daniel Inouye.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For more than two and a half millennia, Jews and Macedonians have a life of tolerance, peace, mutual help, friendship and understanding. During many centuries both Jews and Macedonians are under vitriolic pressure of assimilation and prosecution of Babylonians, Persians, Romans, Byzantines. Many rulers of European empires were seeking to obliterate the Jewish and Macedonian identity of the People and the Land. For example the name of the Jewish Land was changed by Romans to Palestina, after the long-vanished Philistines, an Aegean

people, the name of Jerusalem was changed to Aelia Capitolina. For some of our neighbors, the name and the identity of Macedonians are questionable even now! The name of Macedonia was changed several times in the last two and a half millennia. And in spite of all possible forms of intolerance, hatred, prosecution, suppression and Holocaust the moral and spiritual identity of Jewish and Macedonian People survived the falls of many "eternal" empires! The main goal was to annihilate the ethical and spiritual identity of Jewish and Macedonian People! The annihilators were ready to assimilate these peoples, but not their ethical and spiritual nature. But it was not possible to kill the ideas of their ethics and spirit. There was and always will be an Israel and a Macedonia, a Jewish Spirit and a Macedonian Spirit! A Spirit of Justice, Tolerance and Peace Promotion! The Jews and Macedonians love all nations. They have never promoted or conducted any ethnic cleansing. The existence of Jewish and Macedonian people is a terrible but glorious history of death, sorrow, remembrance and hope. A transcendental surmountableness of the "European Justice" and "The borders of Auschwitz"! A permanent extermination and pillage of these, two peoples and their material and spiritual culture! In the memory of Macedonian Jews perished in the concentration camps, in Skopje, in Macedonia, the President of the Republic of Macedonia Mr. Kiro Gligorov, in 1996 laid the foundation stone of Macedonian Holocaust Memorial Center. The center will be finished at the end of 1999. There is also a commitment for supporting the construction of this Holocaust Memorial Center in Skopje.

The possibility for study stay of an independent world expert aimed at examine the participation of Nazi-Bulgaria at the period in the deportation of Jews, is being considered and its scholarship is approved by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. The financial claims of Macedonian Jews if they are return, will be given in that case, to the Jewish Community of the Republic of Macedonia.

The Jews in Macedonia identified themselves as Macedonian Jews all over the Balkan. After 1912 and the Balkan Wars, when Macedonia was territorially divided by her neighbors in the Almanac of Macedonian emigrants, published 1931 in Sophia, Bulgaria, is written: "Macedonian Jews were always the best friends of Macedonians in their struggle for independence."

Dear participants, I would like to mention the considerations in the Republic of Macedonia are divided in two parts, as follows:

1. The Nazi laws, with brief description of the discriminative and humiliating measures in order to demonstrate the mode of violation of the human rights in occupied Macedonia, and

2. Documents on the confiscated properties. Nazi laws, after the occupation, the Bulgarian Nazi Army has imposed series of restrictive and discriminative laws and regulations.

We will stress only few illustrative examples.

The "Law for the Protection of the Nation" was issued on January 21, 1941, for whole Bulgaria and the occupied territories. This law contained five parts on the origins, general restrictions, places of living restricted for Jews, on the Jewish properties, on the professional and economical activities of the Jews.

On February 17, 1941, additional regulative act entitled "Principles for the Application of the Law for the Protection of the Nation" was issued as integrative part of the Law.

On July 13, 1941 the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Public Health was applied "The Law for the special single Tax payable on all Jewish Real and Personal Estate".

The Department of Jewish Affairs at the same ministry, issued the "Decree No 32" on December 29, 1942, with detailed instructions for wearing special badge, with six pointed, bright yellow star, on all clothes, for all Jews older than 10 years.

"Decree No 5" of the same Department on September 8, 1942 was forbidding all Jews to keep cash and valuable items (gold, jewels, Chinese vases, silverware, archeological items, historical items, paintings, collections, stamps, etc), and they should be deposited on the bank. Confiscation of all Jewish properties continued on the beginning of 1943, and continued until the deportation and final solution on March 11, 1943 Before deportation, the Jews were gathered in labor groups ("trudovi druzini"), along with other minorities, distributed in labor camps in Bulgaria (Naroden glas No. 6 1942).

The second part of our view is addressed on documents of the confiscated assets. This presentation uses documents from the Archives of Macedonia (Skopje, Bitola and Stip). Although abundant documentation is kept in the Archives of Sofia, Belgrade and Salonika, the experts of the Republic of Macedonia still do not have access to those documents. Minimal part of these documents is previously published and kept in the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts, and the Jewish Community in Skopje: Archive in Skopje has 1001 archive units with documents written on 10358 pages. All archive documents are copied and sent to The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The values

of confiscated Jewish assets and the details from the laws and regulations are given in separate listings of the prepared information, which we estimate that will contribute to the final documents and conclusions of this important Conference, in which Macedonian representatives participate for the first time.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The deportation of the Jews from Eastern Aegean Macedonia, Western Trakia and Vardar Macedonia (Republic of Macedonia) was ordered on the base of a Decision of Bulgarian Ministerial Council from March 2, 1943 and it was an Agreement between Bulgarian and German representatives based on this decision. The appropriation of Jewish assets (real and personal estate, money, deposits, insurance, gold, and other valuable belongings) was done by Bulgarian authorities. The experts of National Bank of Republic of Macedonia estimate (only for Jews from Skopje, Vardar Macedonia) on the basis of available, but not complete documents the total amount of Jewish assets to be 16,498,383.95 US dollars and 6,310,909.43 US dollars is the value of the assets without the value of real estate.

On behalf of the delegation of Republic of Macedonia, I hope that on this conference, the commission for claims and returning of the Jewish estate will be formed, covering the Jewish communities in the world, including the Jewish Community in the Republic of Macedonia.

Thank you for your attention.

Concluding Statement

THE NETHERLANDS

By Ambassador Jan d'Ansembourg
HEAD OF DELEGATION

My delegation is very grateful to the organizers of this conference to have given us the opportunity to exchange views on the way governments and NGO's deal with the many injustices which form part of the legacy of the Holocaust.

It has been an extraordinary occasion to explain what has been done in the past, what is currently being done and what will be done in this respect in the future. As far as my delegation is concerned we are happy to have been able, mostly in the break-out sessions, to inform you about what has been done in the Netherlands and what we intend to do.

As a concluding contribution to this conference let me briefly give you an overview of where we stand on the past, present and future of the subjects we have discussed during the last three days.

As far as the past is concerned I will not exhaust you with an enumeration of all the regulations and measures that were devised to give material and immaterial support to the victims of the war. Let me just mention that the drafting and promulgation of measures designed to remedy, wherever possible, the action taken by the Germans against Dutch Jews and other population groups, were undertaken by the Netherlands Government in exile already before the liberation of our country. After the war these measures grew into an extensive corpus of legislation and legal protection in the field of the restoration of legal rights. In retrospect these measures may not always have been successful in taking away the feelings of injustice inflicted by the Nazis on our Jewish population.

Over the years a unique system of legislation was created to meet the needs of different categories of Dutch war victims. It has led, inter alia, to the Victims of Persecution Benefits Act, which awards payments and grants, a total of 4 billion dollars, also to victims who no longer live in the Netherlands, like, for example to some 1,400 people in the U.S.A. In addition to material assistance the Dutch Government

funds a number of organizations that specialize in non-material assistance to war victims.

In the field of art, guidelines for restitution were set in 1947 by the Council of the Netherlands Art Property Foundation which recovered many thousands of items and returned a substantial part of them to their rightful owners. Nevertheless, of all the works of art stolen from the Netherlands during the war more than 8,000 paintings alone are still missing.

As far as Jewish life insurance policies is concerned a situation evolved which led to case law under which insurance policies were generally restored and a large number of amicable settlements were concluded between insurance companies and policy holders. Between 1948 and 1950 some 12,000 amicable settlements were dealt with in this manner. In 1954 nearly all life insurance companies and the Dutch State concluded an agreement for the amicable restitution of legal rights with regard to life insurance and annuity policies of people who had died.

The recent surge in interest in and concern with the fate of the victims of World War II has led, in the Netherlands to the appointment of a ministerial committee chaired by the Prime Minister that oversees the activities of 5 investigative committees. They deal, respectively with Art, Nazi Gold, Financial assets, other tangible assets, and assets seized by the Japanese in the former Dutch East Indies. Some first results of the activities of these committees are starting to come in but the final reports are expected at different moments between later this month and the middle of next year. Apart from this the Jewish community has set up a claims center funded by the Government, where Jewish victims and their heirs can claim stolen property. More than 1,500 substantiated claims have already been received. In 30 cases, mostly insurance policies the claims were honored. More settlements are to be expected.

In the field of restitution of art I want to mention the fact that, after a pilot study, we are going to research the provenance of all state owned works of art that were returned after World War II. Of many of these we know that they are rightfully in the State collection because they were sold voluntarily to the Germans. But since we have found out that in a limited number of cases serious doubts were raised, we want to investigate the total collection.

The example of the Government collections is being followed by the Dutch museums. The details of these investigations and their timetables have been set forth by a member of my delegation during yesterday's break-out session on Nazi Confiscated Art. In the execution

of its restitution policy the Netherlands has applied principles which correspond with the eleven principles proposed by the US delegation.

Many injustices of the Holocaust cannot be rectified because loss of life is irreplaceable and suffering cannot be undone. What can in any case be done though, is to redress unjust situations in the material field which, for whatever reason, have not yet been dealt with until now. While, in the Netherlands war victims have generally benefited from our legislation in the field of restitution, compensation or non-material support, those in Eastern Europe have, until recently, remained deprived of this kind of benefits. For that reason the Dutch Government has decided to allot half of its voluntary contribution to the Nazi Persecutee Relief Fund established at the London Conference to projects in Central and Eastern Europe. Apart from that I should recall that the proceeds of the sale of the last share of the Dutch Nazi gold has been almost totally allotted to the Dutch Jewish community for the support and reinforcement of that community.

As I have mentioned before the reports of the several commissions which dealt with Holocaust-era assets in our country are scheduled to be published in the months to come. The Government is determined to remedy defects in government policy in this area if and where this policy is shown to be deficient.

Other actions that have been undertaken in the Netherlands concern a 364 page archival finding aid, a catalogue of actors involved in the looting of assets, their recuperation, restoration of legal rights and restitution and compensation which will be published next week. This will facilitate research into our archives to which any claimant has free access.

Another current activity that should be mentioned is the request, by the Dutch Government addressed to a foundation to carry out a study of the circumstances in which war victims returned to Dutch society and the way in which they were received and treated in the early postwar years. Next Monday a seminar organized by this foundation will take place in the Netherlands on the way the different groups of returnees have been received back in the Netherlands after the war. This will make it possible for returnees to give expression to their feelings about that period. This meets a general feeling in our country that people in the Netherlands after the war were generally busy with getting their own existence back in order and therefore had insufficient understanding and empathy for their compatriots who felt they did not get the attention they needed.

In one of the break-out sessions in the Holocaust Museum a member of our delegation has pointed out that the focus of Government efforts in the non-material field is aimed at informing and educating young people about the Second World War in an effort to avoid a similar catastrophe in the future. The Government will contribute to the work of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Remembrance, Education and Research. We hope this conference is a start for more international cooperation especially to inform our youngsters.

Concluding Statement

POLAND

By Mrs. Agnieszka Magdziak-Miszewska
ADVISOR TO THE PRIME MINISTER

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the 8th of November, the 60th anniversary of “Kristallnacht”, participating in the ceremony of the rededication of the Wrocaw synagogue recovered by the local Jewish community, the Prime Minister of Poland, Jerzy Buzek said: “Sixty years ago it was decided that the Jews of Wrocaw, as well as German, Polish and European Jews; and their temples will be erased from history, whose new chapters would henceforth be written solely by the racially pure hands of Aryans.

This satanic idea failed. For over fifty years, you Jews and we Christians have been recording the horrible history of the enormous atrocity committed by the Nazis in the heart of Europe. For over fifty years we have been asking in horror: How it was possible? And, as the years go by, we realize more and more that we must not shun an answer to that question, for the future of our continent depends on that answer.

The Wrocaw synagogue is rising from the ruins. The Jewish community of this city is returning from oblivion. I believe that a new chapter of Christian-Jewish and Polish-Jewish dialogue has opened. I believe that in spite of all difficulties, obstacles and mutual prejudices, our common dealings will once again be imbued with trust, cooperation and ordinary human friendship. I believe that the current renaissance of the culture of Polish Jews will once again become an integral part of the culture of Poland, as it had been for eight hundred years.

What I wish from the bottom of my heart I wish it to you, to Wrocaw, and all of Poland.”

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Poland regained its independence a few years ago. After a long period of communist regime, Poland has started the process of regaining of its own history. An integral part of this history is a history of Polish

Jews. The Polish society started the process of regaining its memory. The Holocaust is an integral part of this memory.

It will be a long and painful process also – for Poles but, thinking about our future as a future of the free, democratic country, we must be ready to confront our past in a full truth. This is why we are ready, and will be very, proud to become a part of Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research. This is not only our moral obligation, but we feel that our experience on that field – the experience of the Educational Center of the Auschwitz State Museum and our archives can well serve in that task.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me, in the name of the Polish delegation, and especially in the name of the head of this delegation – Polish Minister of Culture, Mrs. Joanna Wnuk-Nazarowa – to say “thank you” to Miles Lerman and to the Under Secretary of State, Stuart E. Eizenstat, for this conference which starts the international dialogue about the past which should never be forgotten, and about future which is expected to establish the truth and justice. Let me assure you that Poland is ready to participate in it with a good will and openness. We are proud to participate in this great and noble undertaking. We are proud to participate in implementing the moral values to international policy.

Thank you.

Concluding Statement SWITZERLAND

By Ambassador Thomas G. Borer
HEAD OF DELEGATION

Mr. Chairman, Honorable Delegates:

We are nearing the end of a century that has produced more victims on battlefields and in towns and villages, witnessed more crimes against humankind, more atrocities against minorities and political dissidents, has led to greater waves of refugees - has, in short, seen more human suffering than our minds will ever be able to grasp. Within this sad record, the Nazi crimes against humanity are unparalleled. They remain the symbol of the most complete denial of Humanity. As such, they stand before us as a constant warning never to let history repeat itself.

Everyone here will agree that the Holocaust and its unspeakable atrocities must never be forgotten. It is indeed important to develop ways and means of remembrance and sensitivity, and we welcome the opportunity that was given to us here to discuss Holocaust remembrance and education. In remembering the past, we build an important basis for promoting tolerance for the future.

Mr. Chairman, Dear Delegates:

It is in this spirit that I would like to raise an important issue which, I hope, will be of particular interest for the Governments and NGOs gathered here in Washington:

- As you know, the rapid development of racist and anti-Semitic propaganda on the Internet has become a matter of concern for many countries. The Swiss Federal police, for instance, identified 700 such websites in 1997. Not one was based in Switzerland, as the dissemination of racist and anti-Semitic propaganda is strictly forbidden in our country. However, as the Internet has no borders, prohibition in specific countries is not an adequate solution, for hate

propaganda can be disseminated via foreign providers and anonymizers. The need for international cooperation in this field is obvious. Moreover, the development of Internet as a platform for racist, anti-Semitic, and revisionist activists, many of which disseminate the "Auschwitz lie", is all the more worrying as the web appeals to and is used by younger generations. As such, it is a critical task for every nation to contain the spread of hate propaganda on the web. **The Washington Conference carries a huge moral weight. It could thus, in our opinion, send an important signal: A signal showing that its participants are committed to fighting anti-Semitism and racial hatred. A signal that they will not allow the use of new technologies to deny a past that must never be repeated.**

This is why the Swiss delegation would like to inform the various delegations that the Swiss government would be ready, if so wished, to host a governmental conference on the fight against the use of the Internet for racist, anti-Semitic or hate purposes, and to propose concrete remedial steps.

The signal we will send will undoubtedly contribute to the concrete objective of the present conference, which represents one of the great tasks and challenges for the next century: To prevent denial and oblivion of the horrors of this century, as well as their recurrence. Switzerland is committed to this effort towards the future.

Before concluding, Mr. Chairman, let me say a few words about the other topics dealt with during this conference.

On the insurance question, Switzerland welcomes the constructive participation of the three Swiss insurance companies in the "International Commission", and supports the cooperative approach the Commission chose. However, in our view the on-going class action suits are not compatible with this cooperative spirit, and we expect that an intensive dialogue, involving especially the American participants in the said Commission, will soon bring an end to this confrontational element.

Regarding the looted art issue, Switzerland welcomes the on-going discussion on this complex subject. My country has taken important measures in this matter, and welcomes the proposal submitted by the American delegation.

The request for the complete opening of the archives has long been met at the Federal level in Switzerland. Furthermore, the Bergier

Commission has special rights guaranteeing complete access even to private archives.

In concluding, Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the US Department of State, as well as the Holocaust Memorial Museum, for the perfect organization of this important and fruitful conference. Finally, I would not fail to express my appreciation of the very skilled and able Chairmanship of Judge Mikva.

Thank you very much.

Concluding Statement

UNITED STATES

By Under Secretary Stuart E. Eizenstat
HEAD OF DELEGATION

It has been a great honor for me and for the State Department to have co-hosted the Washington Conference on Holocaust-Era Assets. It is a particular privilege to have had as our partner the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, which is doing so much to ensure that the memory and the lessons of the Holocaust endure for future generations.

A year ago, at the London Nazi Gold Conference, we established a goal to complete by the end of this century the unfinished business of the middle of the century: the completion of the long-hidden historical record on Holocaust-era assets and the provision of some measure of justice -- however belated -- to the victims and survivors of that unparalleled tragedy. Now with the conclusion of this conference approaching, we have made great strides toward achieving that historic goal.

As a result of the inspiring seriousness of purpose and spirit of dedication, openness, cooperation, and commitment you -- the 57 delegations, 44 countries, 13 NGOs, and scores of presenters -- have demonstrated, we can genuinely call the Washington Conference a great success. Indeed, we have surpassed our highest expectations and together accomplished more over the past several days than any of us could have possibly imagined when we began our preparations many months ago or even when we began these proceedings this week.

To all those who have participated and contributed, I offer my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation. Most of all, I want offer my thanks to Judge Abner Mikva, whose guiding hand has been critical to the success of this Conference. I also want to commend the Conference Director, J.D. Bindenagel, and our entire team for bringing such a complex undertaking to life and helping ensure its success.

While we must acknowledge our failure to address these issues earlier, we must also acknowledge the work of individuals and organizations who heard the pleas, who understood that justice must be

completed, and who in the face of apathy worked so hard to uncover the truth and to come to the aid of survivors and their families. You refused to let the world forever turn its back to the truth, and to you we owe our enduring appreciation.

Building on those efforts, both governments and NGOs have achieved remarkable progress, particularly in our efforts to shape principles and processes that can guide our efforts to complete the historical record and to seek justice. I would like to briefly address some of those important achievements and focus on our remaining challenges.

First, we can be encouraged that our efforts last year at the London Conference continue to motivate countries to contribute to the Nazi Persecutee Relief Fund. Pledges to the fund -- augmented by Spain at this conference -- which will be used to assist the neediest survivors of the Holocaust, now total \$60 million. We also appreciate Slovenia joining Croatia in pledging their share.

Second, the issue of Holocaust-era insurance claims was one of the more complex and difficult challenges facing this conference. This week's presentations systematically walked us through the historical record of Nazi confiscation. They painted a vivid picture of the well-intended but inadequate compensation efforts after the war, and they updated us on recent actions by insurance regulators and companies to address these issues.

I am pleased that so many delegations have supported the International Commission as the best mechanism for adjudicating claims. The U.S. Government strongly supported the creation of the commission and will work intensively with it. The commission brings together the key actors on both sides of the Atlantic, and we firmly believe that it represents the most appropriate mechanism for promptly resolving unpaid insurance claims from the Holocaust era in a swift, just, and cooperative manner. We urge other companies to join this process.

The commission will help us avoid the trans-Atlantic tensions that at times have been apparent on other Holocaust-era issues. In addition, the commission will seek to expedite a fair settlement of heirless claims so that those funds can be used to urgently help the aging survivors in need.

Resolution of the insurance issue is also being pursued on three separate tracks: through the courts, through legislation, and through regulation. It is our hope that the credibility and effectiveness of the commission's work will convince all the actors pursuing resolution of this issue, including those pursuing litigation, to merge with the IC

process as the best means for quickly and equitably resolving these claims.

Third, art, without a doubt, represents the most complex set of issues we have faced at this conference. Yet I am pleased to note that we have achieved a breakthrough far exceeding our most ambitious expectations. As Philippe de Montebello told us, "The genie is out of the bottle." The art world will never be the same in the way it deals with Nazi-confiscated art. From now on, the sale, purchase, exchange, and display of art from this period will be addressed with greater sensitivity and a higher international standard of responsibility. This is a major achievement which will reverberate through our museums, galleries, auction houses, and in the homes and hearts of those families who may now have the chance to have returned what is rightfully theirs. This will also lead to the removal of uncertainty in the world art market and facilitate commercial and cultural exchange.

We have reached a remarkable degree of consensus on a set of substantive principles, which while not legally binding represent a moral commitment among nations which all in the art world will have to take into account. These principles are the result of intensive consultations with art experts, cultural institutions, and countries before and during the conference. We have listened and incorporated many of your suggestions in order to achieve consensus, and we are very pleased by the explicit support given by so many countries directly to the principles. These principles encourage research into the provenance and identification of art, they call for these findings to be publicized and for the establishment of a central digital registry which will link all Holocaust-era art-loss databases, and they encourage alternative dispute-resolution strategies.

I am pleased to note that several countries have already taken courageous steps to address these issues. For example, Austria, Switzerland, and the Netherlands are researching the provenance of works in their national collections; the French Government has established a web site to display a portion of the some 2,000 pieces of art restituted after the war still unclaimed; and Austria has passed a law to allow restitution notwithstanding such legal obstacles as the statute of limitations. In addition, we are particularly pleased by the announcement of the Russian delegation that they will actively cooperate in resolving outstanding issues related to Holocaust-era art. The actions of these nations could provide useful models for other countries. Indeed, the Austrian law is a model for all countries to follow.

To be sure, it is not enough to identify art that was stolen. We must also establish a system to resolve issues of ownership and

compensation. In that spirit, I urge each national delegation to commit itself to the task of faithfully implementing these principles.

Fourth, this conference is the first time that international attention has been focused so sharply -- with genuine debate -- on the issue of communal property restitution. It was an important opportunity to review both the progress that has been made and the very real obstacles that remain. We also were reminded that restitution is essential to the revitalization of religious and other pluralistic communities as well as to democratic institutions and the rule of law.

We have worked to encourage the new democracies of the region to provide restitution and/or compensation for property wrongfully confiscated -- and to do so in an equitable, transparent, non-discriminatory, and expeditious manner. While most countries in the region recognize their obligation to return confiscated property, there remains in some countries a lukewarm commitment to completing quickly the work at hand.

There is a compelling reason to finish this task as urgently as possible. I have met with Holocaust survivor communities throughout Central and Eastern Europe. Cut off from freedom, their relatives, and the compensation that was available to survivors in the West, many of these elderly survivors are living out their remaining years in poverty and fear. They are truly the double victims of the 20th century -- first of the Nazi Holocaust and then more than 4 decades of communist repression. They deserve to see the return of their communal properties within their lifetimes so their communities can rebuild their shattered existence.

Precisely because restitution of communal property is a difficult process, it requires the urgent, cooperative, and steadfast support of both governments and non-governmental organizations.

We certainly recognize that there are many practical difficulties in resolving these issues, and that circumstances vary among countries. That is why the U.S. has proposed some general principles to address the difficulties faced by all communities. We are urging governments to return secular as well as religious communal properties, to take necessary steps to ensure that restitution policies established at the national level are implemented at the regional and local levels, and to make the legal procedures for filing claims clear and straightforward. At the same time, restitution procedures must take into account the legitimate interests of the current occupants.

On the other hand, we recognize that in some countries local communities are not always able to bear the full cost of restitution. That is why we also urge the establishment of foundations where needed to

help local communities organize their restitution claims as well as involve other groups in assisting local communities with research, legal counsel, and funding for rebuilding. Above all, communal properties should be returned at a much faster rate than they have been so far. This may require more resources from governments and from non-governmental organizations. Even more important, it will require renewed energy and commitment by all concerned. The U.S. Government hopes that in 1999 we can see an intensification of efforts on these issues -- and concrete progress as a result.

We were pleased to hear that Poland has expressed tentative interest in hosting a conference on communal property restitution. This is encouraging, and we would urge other countries in the region to support the idea.

Fifth, a key to success in all the areas this conference has addressed -- and in all aspects of Holocaust-era assets -- is the openness and accessibility of archives. We are concerned that in some countries, archives are still accessible on only a limited basis and others unfortunately appear destined to remain closed. The U.S. vigorously supports the archival openness declaration of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research. That declaration urges that all Holocaust-relevant archives, both public and private, be made widely accessible and that all documentation bearing on the Holocaust be made available to researchers by December 31, 1999.

The work of the 17 historical commissions has been the centerpiece of an amazing outpouring of scholarship on the Holocaust. And a consensus has emerged on the need to use the Internet in making their reports and other related information available. At the planning seminar for this conference in June 1998, we agreed to establish, on the Internet, an international guide to archival sources on gold and other assets looted by the Nazis. I am pleased to report that this guide is up and running. Valuable archival information from the U.K., France, Croatia, and the Bank for International Settlements is linked through a central site hosted by the Holocaust Museum, and more countries are preparing their contributions.

This experience has convinced us to further expand our use of the Internet and institute what we might call a "Mega Web Site" to link the sites of all commissions, governments, and institutions. A "Mega Web Site" is fully possible using current technology. Its users will be able to share all currently available reports and documents on Holocaust-

era assets. This "Mega Web Site" will become even more useful as new participants add their Internet sites and new materials are published.

As a contribution to Holocaust education, research, and remembrance, we plan to include the proceedings of this conference on the website. Although we will publish a volume of the proceedings of this conference in January 1999, we intend to keep the record open until the end of 1999 so that researchers and delegations can contribute the results of work completed subsequent to this conference -- and move toward completing the historical record on the wide range of issues we have addressed this week.

I would like to take note of the fact that Greece, one of the first countries in post-war Europe to restitute property to Holocaust survivors and their heirs, has undertaken another crucial aspect of uncovering history. The Greek Government is funding the publication of a collection of Greek Foreign Ministry documents, which shed new light not only on the history of Thessaloniki, the largest Sephardic community in Europe, but also on the creation of the state of Israel. I would also like to take note of the contribution made by Belarus on developing a book on Holocaust-era assets in their country. We appreciate the spirit in which the Swiss Government has made its proposal on Internet racism and anti-Semitism.

Sixth, our greatest, most solemn and enduring responsibility is to memorialize the lives of the victims by committing ourselves to educating future generations on the full dimensions of the Holocaust. That is why I am so encouraged by the groundbreaking work launched by Sweden to create the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, which has forged the first intergovernmental effort to promote Holocaust education. The U.S. wants to urge the representatives of each country present here to endorse the Task Force declaration on Holocaust education and its call to "undertake with renewed vigor and attention Holocaust education, remembrance and research, with a special focus on our own countries' histories." We are also pleased by the interest on the part of France and the Netherlands to join the task force, which will meet later today to discuss, among other things, how to reach out to include more countries in its work. The U.S. strongly supports the proposal by Sweden to host a conference on Holocaust Education and Remembrance in late 1999 or early 2000.

The Washington Conference comes to a close today, but the process of resolving the outstanding issues of Holocaust-era assets must not. We must use the historical record established, the information

shared, and the consensus reached in the past 3 days to galvanize our efforts in all areas. As a result of our work this week, we can point to principles in some cases, processes in others, and initiatives in still others that will continue to focus our attention and accelerate our progress toward justice. A number of countries have come forward to suggest follow-up efforts by the international community on many of the issues we have discussed here, and these should be seriously considered.

Let me close with a proposed roadmap for fulfilling the call of the London Conference -- and now the Washington Conference as well -- to complete our work for justice before the end of this millennium.

- On insurance, we look to the International Commission to fulfill its mandate and reach a swift and just solution. We recognize the need to merge the IC process with litigation, and the U.S. will support any such efforts.
- On art, the consensus achieved on principles should be translated into action, databases should be linked, and provenance research expedited – all leading to the resolution of claims and the restoration of confidence in the world art market.
- On communal property, we urge the governments to embrace the principles we have proposed and make substantial progress in 1999. I encourage the countries in the region to support the proposal for a follow-up conference to focus further attention on this issue.
- On archives, we urge all the delegations to implement the declaration on opening all public and private archives pertaining to the Holocaust, including assets, by the end of next year.
- On Holocaust education and remembrance, we encourage countries to strengthen their efforts and support the International Task Force and the Stockholm Conference.

It is also important to mention briefly two related issues that were not on the conference agenda:

- Private property restitution was omitted from the conference agenda because of the complexities of the issue, not to indicate that it was unimportant. Countries in the family of

democracies should move swiftly to conclusively address the unjust confiscations that took place during the war and after.

- The landmark settlement by the Swiss banks must be finalized, and the distribution called for in the settlement should be made swiftly so that it can benefit needy Holocaust survivors.

As representatives of our nations and as representatives of humanity, we must never forget that the commitment and resolve we are demonstrating today comes more than 50 years late. Each and every one of us has a solemn and awesome responsibility to see that some small measure of justice for the victims of the Holocaust can be achieved. By doing so, we will rededicate ourselves not only to the work at hand, but also to ensuring that the millions of individual victims will not be forgotten and indeed will guide our efforts in the weeks and months to come.

We appreciate the statements by the Ukrainian and Russian delegations on non-Jewish survivors of the concentration camps and their needs as aging survivors. This merits our serious consideration. As Elie Wiesel has said, "All Jews were victims, but not all victims were Jews." To those who perished in the gas chambers; to those who lost families, homes, property, even their communities and homelands; to the double victims who suffered not only the unimaginable horror of the Holocaust but also 40 years of communist repression; to the survivors, whose cries for justice and restitution were ignored; to the victims' families, to their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren whose pain and sense of loss will never disappear -- it is to their individual memories that we must continue to commit ourselves.

As we pen the final chapter in the unfinished business of the 20th century, we ask that each delegate remember that our efforts at this conference, in some small way, are helping restore that sense of individual dignity and personal humanity for those who amazingly survived and those who tragically perished. May that solemn goal guide us as we tackle the great challenges that lie ahead.

Thank you very much.

Chairman's Concluding Statement

The Honorable Abner J. Mikva

CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN

INTRODUCTION

We have just completed a series of fascinating and challenging discussions over the past 3 days. I believe that the work of this conference has been a landmark event in fulfilling the international community's long-overdue commitment to focus on Holocaust-era assets. It has been a personal privilege to chair proceedings that may well be considered to have made a historic contribution to justice.

I want to thank the delegations from Europe, the United States, Canada, South America, Australia, and the international Jewish and Romani Union communities that have brought a diversity of perspectives and views, but also a common commitment to address candidly these immensely complex and sensitive issues. Our presenters, ranging from historians to insurance regulators, from government officials to museum directors, together with the delegates' responses, have made rich contributions to our substantive agenda.

I also want to express my gratitude to the chairs of our plenary sessions: New York Federal Reserve President McDonough on gold; Ambassador Olson on insurance; Congressman Leach on art; Congressman Gilman on communal property; and French Ambassador Amigues on archives, books, and historical commissions.

Finally, of course, I want to thank Stuart Eizenstat and the State Department, together with Miles Lerman and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, for so ably hosting the Conference. I also want to commend J.D. Bindenagel, the Conference Director, and his entire team for their skillful management of this week's sessions and their painstaking preparations over many months.

In her remarkable keynote address on Tuesday morning Secretary Albright displayed a frankness and openness that set the tone for the entire Conference. She called on our nations "to chart a course for

finishing the job of returning or providing compensation for stolen Holocaust assets to survivors and the families of Holocaust victims." I believe that together we have risen to the challenge.

We have made important advances in developing principles and processes for addressing the complex issues relating to restitution for confiscated insurance, art, and communal property assets in particular. We have also made significant strides in identifying the specific problems that must be surmounted in order to achieve the widest possible openness and accessibility of relevant archives. We have also emphasized the enduring importance of Holocaust education and remembrance for future generations. I would like to add the personal observation that throughout our deliberations, Conference delegates have displayed a willingness to examine the historical record and to consider the case for justice.

My purpose in this statement is two-fold: first, to summarize highlights of the many presentations and discussions; and second, to crystallize major areas of consensus around principles and processes which I believe have been reached. Let me be clear: Consistent with the terms of reference of the conference, these are areas of general consensus, not formal agreement or binding commitment. I invite each delegation to add any supplementary material to the conference record by mid-January. The conference proceedings will be published in the spring of 1999 and a second volume will be issued at the end of 1999 documenting further research and progress. Moreover, I believe that we have achieved a basis for sustaining and accelerating the international community's willingness to act.

Let me now turn to each of the substantive sections of the agenda we have completed, proceeding in the order in which they were addressed in plenary sessions.

LOOTED GOLD AND THE TRIPARTITE GOLD COMMISSION

The brief plenary session held on looted gold may be the final large-scale discussion on the part of so many countries on this set of issues. From the head of the U.S. delegation we heard an overview of the major research completed on wartime gold transactions over the last year since the London Conference by national historical commissions in Switzerland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and Turkey, as well as by the United States. Drawing on these and other previous reports, elements of an historical consensus have now been established on looted gold.

France reported on its completion, together with Britain and the United States, of their governments' collective responsibility as custodians of the Tripartite Gold Commission over five decades. With the opening of its archive and the actions of many countries in dealing with remaining claims on gold, its mission has been completed with dignity and justice.

The United Kingdom presented an encouraging report on the progress of the Nazi Persecutee Relief Fund, a laudable effort by which Tripartite Gold Commission claimant countries and others have now pledged over \$60 million to assist the neediest survivors of the Holocaust. The mechanisms through which donations can be made and projects implemented were described. A number of delegations -- including Italy, the Netherlands, and Belgium -- shared details about their previous pledges or contributions. We also heard from Spain that it would channel its previously announced contribution through the Nazi Persecutee Relief Fund. Slovenia and Croatia indicated their intention to pledge to the Fund.

INSURANCE

I believe that this Conference has brought unprecedented international focus on the wrenching history of Holocaust insurance claims. We have learned that, through direct and indirect means, the Nazi regime deliberately sought to confiscate the insurance assets of Jewish victims. In recognition of this massive loss and injustice, the postwar West German Government made an effort to compensate the victims. According to the German delegation, after the war and as of January 1998, the German Government had paid out 102 billion deutsche marks in compensation to victims of Nazi persecution. Over the next several years, the German compensation program is expected to pay out another 24 billion deutsche marks (about \$14 billion), including for the first time direct payments to central and eastern European survivors.

Other delegates indicated that there is also a need to address claims arising from assets and liabilities that were nationalized by former communist regimes in central and eastern Europe.

By bringing together key parties on both sides of the Atlantic, the International Commission offers the most effective vehicle for resolving these issues swiftly and justly. The insurance firms Allianz and Generali noted their commitment to pay all valid claims against their companies and to participate fully in the Commission. The Commission

also will help forge a positive, cooperative approach that can avoid transatlantic tensions of the kind that have at times arisen on other Holocaust-era issues.

Delegates representing survivor organizations and American insurance commissioners thanked those on the International Commission for addressing their concerns, noting that the Commission is a voluntary organization that includes, *inter alia*, six European insurers and two European insurance regulators. Many delegates called for other companies and countries to join the International Commission. The head of the Czech Delegation reported on the activities of the Czech Working Group on Holocaust Insurance and said that the Czech Government supports the proper representation of the survivor communities in the Czech Republic and other central and eastern European countries on the International Commission. The Hungarian delegation indicated its interest in cooperating with the International Commission.

The Chairman of the International Commission has assured us that he will move quickly to press for expanded membership, an audit to identify unpaid Holocaust-era insurance claims, and an expeditious adjudication of claims, using relaxed standards of proof.

Moreover, a view was often expressed that a humanitarian relief fund may provide swift means for compensating Holocaust survivors promptly. In this regard, many welcomed the \$90 million contribution by insurance companies to the International Commission's fund for humanitarian relief.

ART

On the topic of art, the conference was presented with the history of how the Nazis confiscated art works of individuals as part of a deliberate and premeditated program to enrich their leaders, finance their military aggression, and exterminate an entire people. We were told how post-war restitution policies were generally successful, but fell short of restoring property to many individuals. We have reached a greater understanding of why restitution issues were dormant for so many years and why they have suddenly reappeared with renewed force, creating a challenge to legal frameworks, all sectors of the art world, and concepts of morality and justice.

Several delegations described what their countries are trying to do in order to balance the claims of pre-war owners against the rights and responsibilities of current owners, be they museums, galleries, or

individual collectors. Representatives of several museums emphasized the challenges in establishing clear provenance of artworks caught in the dislocation of the War and its aftermath. Delegates were also briefed on the work being done with claimants to help them recall the nature and circumstances of their loss with the specificity needed to make a viable claim.

The work being done using new technologies to check claims against catalogues and inventories has also helped expedite the process. As we have heard, there is already a substantial effort to locate and publicize missing art works, determine their provenance, and come to an equitable resolution of ownership questions. The Russian delegation indicated its willingness to search for confiscated art works, to help create a database, and to entertain properly presented claims for the return of looted art.

My sense from these discussions is that the nations represented at this conference are willing to open their archives to facilitate research leading to the identification and location of art confiscated during the Holocaust. They welcome the development of computerized research tools designed to aid this search by matching identified art with claims. They look forward to the completion of central on-line repositories -- a "digital collecting point" as one participant called it -- that would include complete lists of missing and recovered art works and mechanisms for filing claims.

The delegates' discussions during the conference helped develop a set of principles to guide the international community toward a consensus on Nazi-confiscated art. All countries want to contribute toward a speedy resolution of all art claims, those of individuals as well as those of nations, so that stability can be restored to the art market and beneficial international cultural exchange will not be disrupted.

As Chairman, I am pleased to recognize one of the most important accomplishments coming out of the discussion of this conference: a consensus that, within the context of the national laws and national judicial processes of the participating nations, the 11 principles on art offer a means for addressing the major issues relating to Nazi-confiscated art. Although they are non-binding, they will be a moral force and guide for dealing with this issue.

COMMUNAL PROPERTY

Delegations discussed the varying and difficult circumstances surrounding restitution of communal property and artifacts. Much of this property is in run-down condition, owned by the government or currently inhabited. One delegate made the point that at the end of the War and during the communist period, the political and social environment for Jews in central and eastern Europe was inhospitable and that emigration was considered the main alternative. With new democratic governments, religious life is reviving throughout the region for Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant communities alike. Return of their property is essential.

Much has been done to return communal property, but historical differences and current political realities have led each country to proceed on restitution in its own way. The conference heard encouraging reports indicating that the countries of eastern and central Europe have perceived the need for communal property restitution and some have set up legal structures to provide restitution or compensation. However, obstacles remain, making the process of restitution very slow.

The Polish, Romanian, and Hungarian delegations shared their national experiences in handling communal property restitution in their countries, including the laws passed and the status of implementation. Two speakers described the relative success of property restitution in eastern Germany and expressed the hope that it would also be successful elsewhere. Almost all affected countries have taken action to return property or compensate religious groups for their confiscated property. We also heard the perspectives of international organizations on the progress and stumbling blocks to restitution, including the significance of return and care for religious artifacts and cemeteries.

The United States described a set of principles to make the process of restitution just and effective. To implement these principles, "best practices" include: clear restitution policies implemented at the national, regional and local levels and not limited to religious communal property; transparent and simple procedures for legal claims; and, where needed, establishment of foundations jointly managed by local communities and international groups to assist with claims and administration of restituted property. Lastly, governments should take into account legitimate needs of current occupants of restituted property. The Chair encourages governments to implement these principles.

ARCHIVES AND HISTORICAL COMMISSIONS

One of the central achievements of the London Conference was to highlight the importance and urgency of greater openness and accessibility of archives and records bearing on Holocaust-era assets. Since London, we have had the occasion to applaud the immense progress achieved on all Holocaust-era assets issues and to recognize that it has only been possible as a result of the opening in so many countries of the relevant historical archives. We have heard during this conference of the great outpouring of important Holocaust research undertaken in the last several years by 17 national historical commissions that have been established to compile an accurate and final historical accounting of Holocaust assets issues. These national commissions, with varying mandates but with a common goal of examining wartime experiences have done vital and courageous work examining the formerly hidden aspects of a terrible period of history.

We heard yesterday from a broad range of commissions and experts who described the current status of their individual projects and the progress they have made and the problems they have encountered in identifying and preserving records and making sense of them. The U.K. delegation described to us the research at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on postwar British policies on reparations and restitution. The U.S. delegation reviewed the great success of the National Archives in Washington in quickly assembling more than 15 million pages of Holocaust-era records, devising a finding aid to those records that now approaches 1000 pages in length, and making the National Archives research room the center of international study of these issues.

The German delegation reminded the conference of the destructive impact of the Nazi German regime, the war, and the dislocations of the postwar period on the critical historical records in Germany, and pointed to the vital importance of accurate document "provenance," in order to assure a properly preserved historical record for any society. Finally, Switzerland gave us a summary of the wide-ranging mandate of the Swiss Independent Commission of Experts which has already reported in great detail on wartime gold transactions and is close now to publishing a final report on the treatment of refugees in Switzerland before and during the war.

Break-out sessions yesterday heard many reports on the problems and possibilities confronting archivists and commissions in many countries. I cannot summarize here all that was discussed, but it

was important to hear of the issues facing the Netherlands as it established its Commission on Jewish assets and of the Holocaust-era archival projects undertaken by the Yad Vashem Institute, particularly the list of lists with its 18 million entries thus far. I believe we all took encouragement from the reports we heard about the diverse but critical research underway or recently completed by the historical commissions in Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and Argentina.

While we congratulate those countries that have worked to identify and make available archives and other sources of information on this period, many conference participants emphasized the importance of full archival openness. The Task Force on International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research presented a declaration encouraging all archives, both public and private, be made more widely accessible and that all documentation bearing on the Holocaust be available to researchers by a target date of December 31, 1999.

BOOKS

The conference was reminded of an issue thus far not fully grasped in our consideration of Holocaust-era assets. We heard reports from U.S. experts that will help define and deal with the despoliation of libraries and private collections of books in occupied Europe and the vital urgency of setting the book issue to rights. The delegate from the U.S. Justice Department detailed how the American occupation authorities in Germany rescued 3 million books looted from Jewish individuals and communities and was able to return 2.5 million of these books to their countries of origin or rightful owners by 1948. The remainder of the books were distributed to appropriate recipients by Jewish groups. Another delegate warned that a shortage of resources threatened preservation activities and access to many invaluable books and papers from the Holocaust era.

EDUCATION

A striking aspect of this conference, from the solemn ceremony and eloquent speeches made on Monday evening at the Holocaust Museum, to the statements we heard earlier in our closing plenary session this morning, is the emphasis placed so forcefully by so many on

the importance of Holocaust education and remembrance. Speaker after speaker from country after country told us of their appreciation of the importance of teaching future generations about the unique tragedy and the lessons it can offer as this century comes to a close.

A remarkably rich series of break-out panels held yesterday at the Holocaust Museum featured leading Holocaust educators from both sides of the Atlantic, including both distinguished scholars and leaders of non-governmental organizations. A number of materials on Holocaust curricula and remembrance activities being undertaken by these organizations and others, as well as by governments, were on display and available for delegates.

The break-out sessions at the Museum and more briefly our plenary session earlier today highlighted the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research. Initiated by Sweden, currently chaired by the United States, and also composed of the United Kingdom, Israel and Germany, the Task Force presented a report describing its specific efforts underway to promote international cooperation in these important areas. The Task Force report includes a declaration committing the Task Force countries and calling on others to strengthen or undertake new efforts on Holocaust education and remembrance. France and the Netherlands have already expressed a desire to participate in the Task Force, and it is likely that other countries will join them.

As the conference drew to a close, the delegates looked forward to other gatherings to continue the work of this historic meeting. The Swedish delegation announced its intention to convene an international conference on Holocaust education. The World Jewish Restitution Organization suggested on behalf of many of the non-governmental organizations that the important work of the conference should be continued next year in Jerusalem. The U.K. delegation spoke in favor of "satellite conferences" to address different issues. The head of the U.S. delegation urged conference countries to use the historical record established, the information shared, and the consensus reached in the past 3 days to galvanize our efforts in all areas.

CONCLUSION

Let me conclude by reaffirming my view that this conference has added substantially to the historical record on these events, so terrible and tragic for those involved, while strengthening the framework for

countries to work together to act on the difficult and painful issues of restitution and justice.

The willingness of so many countries to confront the past is enormously encouraging, especially after so many decades. I urge us all to continue down this path, determined to meet our historic responsibilities to address the unparalleled wrongs of this century as the new millennium beckons.