

28 January 2008

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,
on the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the
Victims of the Holocaust**

Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,

First of all may I greet Maestro Zubin Mehta and the members of the Buchmann-Mehta Orchestra from Tel Aviv University.

It is with great honour that I welcome all of you to the General Assembly, the amphitheatre of the world - a witness of cooperation and confrontation; understanding and ignorance; coherence and difference among Member States.

But still, we all have something in common – our conscience and consciousness. This must guide us, not only in remembering the sins of deeds done by one people to another, but also in our vision to create a world of tolerance, solidarity and common sense.

The Holocaust fed man's ego with delusions of supremacy, and tried to erase the bonds that all human beings share. We must spare no effort to ensure that we never again witness such evil.

Today, is therefore more than a commemoration; it is more than a remembrance; it must serve as a call to action in honour of the victims and survivors of the Holocaust.

Who better than Holocaust survivors can recount the absurd and unconceivable atrocities against humanity, committed in an era and based on an ideology of hatred and insanity; but, to make the nonsense even greater masked itself in the guise of the "Übermensch".

I would like to pay tribute to Congressman Tom Lantos and to all survivors, whose courage and perseverance have ensured that the traumatic lessons from the Holocaust have fortified our collective conscience.

In their honour and all those that did not survive, today let us evoke - through solemn reflection of the past – an inspirational vision of conviction and hope for a better future.

Dear friends,

Living in the era of globalisation means more than the evolution of communication, technology, and economy; it must also lead to the evolution of global consciousness. An evolved mindset

immune from any evil thoughts of genocide, crimes against humanity or even crimes based on mental degradation.

We should all be aware that our thoughts become words; words become deeds; deeds become habits; habits become our character; and, our character becomes our attitude.

An evolved attitude must be based on the regard of the pain of the other – as the great New York writer Susan Sontag defined it in her last book before she passed away.

I am deeply convinced that if we look back into history there are some bitter lessons to learn. In particular, that war begins when the perception of the pain of others ends, and also the other way around, when the perception of the pain of others begins there is no room for war.

Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,

It is incumbent upon all of us, Member States and all members of society, to embrace our interdependence, and realign the ethical compass that will allow us to transcend our differences. We each therefore have a singular goal that we should make our life's mission – to watch and awaken our own consciousness - and in doing so create a better, more just and equal world. Therein lies the hope and opportunity for a new culture of international relations based on human rights, human security, the responsibility to protect and sustainable development. Achieving this must be our lasting legacy to future generations.

Thank you.