

25 January 2013

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić,
President of the 67th Session of the General Assembly,
on the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of Victims of
the Holocaust**

Delivered by H.E. Mr. Raymond Serge Balé, Vice-President of the United Nations General Assembly

Mr. Under-Secretary-General,
Distinguished Guests,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to be here with you today to recognise the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust.

This international day marks the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp. It provides us the opportunity to solemnly remember the unprecedented and systematic extermination of six million Jews as well as other ethnic and national groups by the fascist Nazi regime and their collaborationist puppet regimes.

The Holocaust remains one of the greatest crimes against humanity this world has ever seen.

Atrocities were committed out of pathological hatred and racism against millions of innocent men, women and children.

Excellencies,

The Holocaust was a turning point in the history of mankind. This was the defining moment when humanity collectively agreed that a crime of this scale of this virtually unfathomable scope should never be allowed to happen again.

It is fitting that the General Assembly Resolution which established this international day calls not only for remembrance of the untold suffering of Holocaust victims but also reminds us that we have a moral obligation to warn against the horrors of hatred and prejudice, to prevent future acts of genocide, of which the Holocaust is the most conspicuous example the world has ever seen.

We look back today in shared grief, but we can gather strength in our universal desire to promote peace, tolerance and human dignity.

Excellencies,

The theme of this year's commemoration is "Rescue during the Holocaust: The Courage to Care".

In spite of Nazi Germany and the prevailing atmosphere of fear and terror, there were brave and principled individuals from across the world who risked their lives to save people from being sent to the death camps.

These unsung heroes of the Holocaust naturally faced the most severe consequences if caught.

Even though these individual acts of conscience and courage saved just a small number of people from the gas chambers, they were hugely significant on a symbolic level. I am reminded of a line from the Talmud, the chief text of Rabbinic Judaism which says "whoever preserves a single soul, it is as though he had preserved a whole world."

The values demonstrated by those who rose above evil to save others serve as guiding principles to protect the human rights of future generations courage, compassion, moral leadership, self-sacrifice, social responsibility, integrity, and righteousness.

Excellencies,

The United Nations arose out of the devastation of the Second World War, the victory over fascism and the infamy of the Holocaust.

The UN Charter states that we the people are determined to "reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women."

By remembering the victims of the Holocaust and by recognizing our responsibility to acknowledge and act upon all bigotry and hatred wherever it occurs, we are honouring the values and goals of the United Nations.

As members of this family of nations, it remains our collective responsibility to reaffirm the universal message of peace and tolerance to all of humankind.

Thank you for your attention.