



THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

20 January 2015

Excellency,

Following my letter of 12 November 2014 informing you that upon the request of a group of Member States I will convene on 22 January 2015 an informal meeting of the plenary of the General Assembly to address concerns of a rise in anti-Semitic violence worldwide, please find enclosed a provisional programme of the event.

Your personal participation at the meeting will be highly appreciated.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam K. Kutesa', with a stylized flourish to the right.

Sam K. Kutesa

To All Permanent Representatives and  
Permanent Observers to the United Nations  
New York

Provisional Programme  
**Informal meeting of the General Assembly**  
**to address concerns of a rise in anti-Semitic violence worldwide**  
 22 January 2015

9:00 a.m.	<p><b><u>Morning (General Assembly Hall)</u></b></p> <p><b>Opening segment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>H.E. Mr. Álvaro Mendonça e Moura</b>, Acting President of the General Assembly</li> <li>• <b>H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon</b>, Secretary-General (video message)</li> <li>• <b>Mr. Bernard-Henri Lévy</b>, French intellectual, philosopher and writer, Keynote speaker</li> </ul> <p><b>Statements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hon. <b>Steven Blaney</b>, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Canada</li> <li>• H.E. <b>Harlem Désir</b>, State Secretary for European Affairs, France</li> <li>• H.E. <b>Michael Roth</b>, Minister of State for Europe at the Federal Foreign Office, Germany</li> <li>• H.E. <b>Samantha Power</b>, Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations and member of President Obama's Cabinet</li> </ul> <p><b>List of speakers</b> (limited to 3 minutes)</p>
3:00 p.m.	<p><b><u>Afternoon (Trusteeship Council Chamber)</u></b></p> <p><b>Panel discussion</b></p> <p>Moderator: <b>H.E. Mr. Álvaro Mendonça e Moura</b>, Acting President of the General Assembly</p> <p>Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Hon. Mr. Theodore E. Deutch</b>, Representative, United States House of Representatives</li> <li>• <b>Hon. Prof. Irwin Cotler</b>, P.C., O.C., M.P., House of Commons, Canada, Former Minister of Justice &amp; Attorney General of Canada, Emeritus Professor of Law, McGill University</li> <li>• <b>Mr. Wade Henderson</b>, President and CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and The Leadership Conference Education Fund</li> <li>• <b>Ms. Elisa Massimino</b>, President and Chief Executive Officer, Human Rights First</li> <li>• <b>Prof. Robert S. Wistrich</b>, Director, The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Hebrew University of Jerusalem</li> </ul>
4:30 p.m.	<p><b>Discussion</b> – Continuation of list of speakers from the morning, plus requests from the floor</p>
5:40 p.m.	<p><b>Wrap-up</b> – Closing remarks by the panellists and the Acting President of the General Assembly</p>

22 January 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,  
President of the 69<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
at the General Assembly meeting on the rise of anti-Semitism**

**Honourable Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Mr. Bernard Henri-Lévy,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am pleased to join you today to deliver this statement on behalf of H.E. Sam Kutesa, President of the General Assembly, who was unable to join us today.

**Esteemed Guests,**

The prohibition of religious and racial discrimination is enshrined within many of the international community's most important foundational documents. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for example, proclaims that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind; such as race, religion or other status.

A number of other core international human rights instruments further elaborate on our shared commitment to upholding the basic principles of equality and non-discrimination.

Yet, despite these commitments, we are currently witnessing a disquieting rise of anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance and prejudice. Such forms of discrimination have perpetuated a wide range of negative outcomes; including, stereotyping, stigmatization, exclusion, threats and violence.

Next week, the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the victims of the Holocaust will be an important occasion to remember the horrors of the Second World War.

It is not only our solemn duty to remember the tragedies that took place, but it is our responsibility to learn from the unspeakable atrocities of the Holocaust. Furthermore, it is our obligation to prevent such acts of intolerance and hate from ever happening again.

Recent troubling events around the world have put into sharp focus the deep divisions within our communities. We must condemn, without reservation, all manifestations of intolerance; including, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, racism and all other forms of prejudice, incitement, harassment or violence against persons or communities based on race, ethnic origin or religious belief.

**Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,**

As we witness the shadow of intolerance permeating so many segments of public and private life, it is of utmost importance that all stakeholders be actively involved in our efforts to fight against prejudice, while also promoting and strengthening tolerance, mutual understanding, dialogue and respect.

We have many tools at our disposal in these endeavours, including education, which can be a powerful weapon against prejudice and discrimination. The path for a more humane and tolerant world must come via the classroom, where education needs to be rooted in the principles of dignity and respect.

For my part, I am convening a high-level thematic debate on 6 April, titled “Promoting Tolerance and Reconciliation”. This event will provide an opportunity for participants to discuss practical strategies to enhance dialogue and understanding. It will also allow participants to explore measures to counter extremism and radicalization.

I look forward to having a diverse range of stakeholders at this high-level debate for an open exchange of ideas and solutions. All Member States are strongly urged to attend at the highest possible level.

I thank you for your attention.

22 January 2015

## **General Assembly meeting on the rise of anti-Semitism**

*Statement by Mr. Bernard-Henri Lévy, French philosopher and writer*

### **Ambassadors, presidents, ministers, ladies and gentlemen:**

It is not very often that a philosopher is called upon to speak in this forum.

It is one of the first times (Elie Wiesel, Jiddu Krishnamurti, I can't see any others) that a writer stands at this dais from which so many great voices have rung out and where the cause of peace and brotherhood among peoples has achieved some of its most important and noble advances.

It is therefore with great emotion, believe me, and with a deep sense of honor that I address you today.

But you invited me, this morning, not to hear me hold forth on the honor and nobility of humanity but rather to lament, alas, the renewed advance of the radical inhumanity, the total baseness, that is anti-Semitism.

In Brussels, just a few months ago, the memory of the Jews and the keepers of that memory were attacked.

In Paris, just a few days ago, we heard once again the infamous cry of "Death to the Jews!" – and cartoonists were killed for cartooning, police for policing, and Jews just for shopping and being Jews.

And in other capitals, many others, in Europe and elsewhere, faulting the Jews is once again becoming the rallying cry of a new order of assassins—unless it is the same, but cloaked in new habits.

The United Nations was set up, also, to fight this plague.

This assembly was given the sacred task of preventing those terrible spirits from reawakening.

But they have returned—and that is why we are here.

On the subject of this curse, on the subject of its causes and the means by which to resist it, I would like to begin by refuting a number of current analyses that I fear serve only to keep us from looking this evil squarely in the face.

It is not true, for example, that anti-Semitism is just a form of racism. Both must be fought, of course, with equal determination. But one cannot fight what one does not understand. And it must be

understood that, if the racist hates in the Other his visible and conspicuous Otherness, the anti-Semite hates his invisible and indefinable difference – and on that awareness the nature of the strategies that one will have to deploy is going to depend.

Nor is it true that the new anti-Semitism has, as one hears constantly, especially in the US, its main root in the Arab-Islamic world. In my country, for example, it has a double source that acts as a sort of double bind. There are, it is true, the many lost souls of a radical Islam that has become the most toxic opium invading the lost territories of our Republic. But there is also that old French monster that, since the Dreyfus Affair and Vichy, has slept with one eye open and, in the end, is not incompatible with the Islamofascist beast.

And, finally, it is not accurate to say that the policy of a particular state—I am referring, obviously, to the state of Israel—generates anti-Semitism in the way clouds produce a storm. I have seen European capitals in which the destruction of the Jews was nearly total, yet where anti-Semitism still thrives. I have seen others, farther away, where no Jews have ever lived – yet where the word Jew is a synonym for the devil. And I say here that even if Israel’s conduct were exemplary, even if Israel were a nation of angels, even if were granted the Palestinians the state that is their right—even then, alas, this enigmatic and old hatred would not dissipate one iota.

Ladies and gentlemen, to understand how anti-Semitism really and concretely operates today, we must abandon these clichés and rather listen to how it is expressed and how its worshipper justify it. Because, after all, the anti-Semites have never been content to say, “Well, that’s how it is—we’re bad people and we hate the poor Jews.”

No.

They said, “We hate them because they killed Christ.” That was Christian anti-Semitism.

They said, “We hate them because, by producing monotheism, they invented Christ.” That was the anti-Semitism of the Enlightenment, which wanted to do away with religion altogether.

They said, “We hate them because they belong to another species recognizable by traits seen in them alone and that pollute other species.” That was racist anti-Semitism, the variety contemporaneous with the emergence of the modern life sciences.

They even said, “We have nothing against the Jews per se—no, no, really, nothing at all. And we couldn’t care less whether they killed or created Christ or whether they are a separate race or not. Our complaint is just that most of them are plutocrats bent on dominating the world and oppressing the humble people.” That was the socialism for dummies that, throughout Europe, infected the workers’ movement at the time of the Dreyfus Affair.

Today, none of those arguments works any more.

For reasons having to do with the history of the terrible 20th century, very few people, thanks god, remain unaware that all those anti-Semitic arguments resulted in abominable massacres and are therefore, as a french anti-Semite writer once said, discarded by Hitlerism.

So, for the old virus to resume its assault on people's minds, for it once again to be able to inflame crowds of ordinary people, for great numbers of men and women to resume hating while believing that they are sort of doing good or, if you prefer, to believe that there could be legitimate reasons to hate the Jews, a new set of arguments is needed, one that history has not yet had time to debunk.

Today's anti-Semitism says three things, at bottom.

It can operate on a large scale, convince, put fire in the brains, only by offering three shameful but new propositions.

The Jews are detestable because they are supposed to support an evil, illegitimate, murderous state. This is the anti-Zionist delirium of the merciless adversaries of the re-establishment of the Jews in their historical fatherland.

The Jews are all the more detestable because they are supposed to base their beloved Israel on imaginary suffering, or suffering that at the very least has been outrageously exaggerated. This is the shabby and infamous denial of the Holocaust.

In so doing, the Jews would commit a third and final crime that could make them still more guilty, which is to confuse us with the memory of their dead, to completely stifle other peoples' memories and to overshadow other martyrs whose deaths have plunged parts of today's world, most emblematically that of the Palestinians, into mourning. And here we come face to face with the modern-day scourge, stupidity, that is competitive victimhood.

Anti-Semitism needs these three formulations, which are like the three vital components of a moral atomic bomb.

Each taken separately would be enough to discredit a people, to make it abominable once more. But when the three are combined, brought into contact and allowed to form a knot, a node, a crux, a helix—well, at that point we can be pretty sure of facing an explosion of which all Jews, everywhere, will be the designated targets.

What a monstrous people, they say, capable of all three of these crimes!

What a strange picture is formed by this community of men and women adulterating what they should hold most sacred—the memory of their dead—for the base purpose of legitimizing an illegitimate state and sentencing the rest of the world's victims to deaf and dumb silence.

That is modern anti-Semitism.

Anti-Semitism will not return on a large scale unless it succeeds in popularizing this insane and vile portrait of the modern Jew.

It has to be anti-Zionist, it must deny the Holocaust, it must feed the competition of pain—or it will not thrive: the logic is implacable; despicable but compelling to recognize that, ladies and gentlemen, is to begin to see, symmetrically, what you can do to combat this calamity.

Let us imagine a UN General Assembly in which Israel would have its place, its full place, a country among others, no more and no less flawed than others, bound by the same responsibilities but enjoying the same rights —and let us imagine, while we are at it, that you unanimously acknowledge it to be what it truly is: an authentic, solid, and rare democracy.

Let us imagine a UN General Assembly that, faithful to its founding agreement, made itself the diligent guardian of the memory of the worst genocide conceived since man began to walk the earth—imagine that 2015 was the year when, under your high authority and with the help of the very top world scientific scholars, the most complete, exhaustive, and definitive conference ever convened on the attempt to destroy the Jews was held.

And let us dream, somewhere between New York, Geneva, Jerusalem or Durban, of a second conference, yes a second one, devoted to all the forgotten wars that cast their tragic shadow over the inhabited world but that are not talked about too much because they do not fit within the framework of blocs or groups into which you divide yourselves. And let us dream, then, that this second conference, by adopting the position opposite to the stupid and grotesque idea that a given heart has room for just one object of compassion and empathy, reveals what was the real truth of the past decades: it was by remembering the Holocaust that we immediately recognized the horror of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia; it was when we had in mind the standard of inhumanity of the Holocaust that we understood without delay what was happening in Rwanda or Darfur; I could multiply examples, but this is the law – far from blinding us to the torment of other peoples, the will to forget nothing of the torment of the Jewish people is always, which renders salient, obvious, the affliction of the Burundians, Angolans, Zairians, and so many more, including Palestinians.

By adopting such a program, you would be fighting real anti-Semitism.

By 1. rehabilitating this Israel that your Assembly did bear on the baptismal fonts 70 years ago, by 2. using your colossal authority in order to make shut up, once and forever, the negationist morons, and by bearing yourself in close support 3. to the true damned and cursed that have been sacrificed, in Durban for example, on the altar of the antizionist madness, you would be methodically deconstructing, one by one, each of its components.

But at the same time – I repeat – you would be truly defending human rights and the the cause of humanity !

I would not be here, ladies and gentlemen, if I did not think that this forum was one of the only ones in the world—and perhaps the only one—in which can be orchestrated that solidarity of the shaken of which spoke Jan Patočka, the great Czech philosopher, and which has been the throughline of my life.



When, in my country, the highest officials of the government recently said, “France without its Jews would no longer be France,” they erected a dike against infamy.

But when, in that same country, we, French, saw a quarter of you, one head of state or government out of four, marching beside us to say “I am Charlie, I am a police officer and I am a Jew,” it was a reason of true hope that we nearly had stopped waiting.

Your presence here this morning, your will to make this event possible and perhaps memorable, your good faith and obvious will to act, all of this attest to the fact that on all continents, in all cultures and civilizations, people are beginning to realize that the struggle against anti-Semitism is an ardent obligation for everyone—and that is good news indeed.

When a Jew is struck, said another writer, humanity falls to the ground.

When you go after the Jews, insisted an early opponent of the Nazis, it is like a first line crumbling under an invisible volley that eventually will hit the rest of us as it draws closer.

A world without Jews indeed would not be a world. A world in which the Jews once again would become the scape goats for all people’s fears and frustrations would be a world in which free people could not breathe easy and the enslaved would be even more enslaved.

It is up to you now to take the floor and to act.

It is up to you, who are the faces of the world, to be the architects of a house in which the mother of all hates—anti-Semitic hate—would see its place reduced.

May you in a year’s time, and the year after that, and every other year, reconvene to observe that our mobilization of today was not in vain and that the beast can be kept at bay.