

OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism, Berlin, 28-29 April 2004***Speech delivered by H.E. Mr. Dragisa Burzan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro, Head of delegation of Serbia and Montenegro***

Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of state union of Serbia and Montenegro I would like to greet you most warmly and commend the OSCE commitment to Maastricht Decision on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination and to this follow up of Vienna 2003 OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism. Allow me to take this opportunity to thank the Federal Republic of Germany, on its offer to host this important event.

Coming from turbulent region, we are well aware that we have to fight against all contemporary evils: wars, destruction, xenophobia and ethnic cleansing caused by intolerance and hatred. This is the only way to become a part of modern Europe which strives for tolerant and democratic society in which all nations, religions and ethnic groups have their place and coexist in harmony.

Jewish community has given enormous contribution to modern civilization through science, culture and literature. We should all be proud of such a legacy. However, throughout history, Jews have faced prejudice and discrimination, known as anti-Semitism, which exploded in the 20th century Holocaust.

Due to planned, organized and orchestrated campaign against Jews during the World War II, Jewish community in former Yugoslavia, according to the data by Alliance of Jewish Municipalities of Serbia and Montenegro, tragically fell from 82.000 to only 15.000 after the war.

I am glad to say that Mr. Aco Singer, one of the survivors of the Holocaust, President of Jewish organization in Serbia and Montenegro, which gathers 3000 members, is with us today.

According to the assessment of the Alliance of Jewish Municipalities, there are less occurrences of anti-Semitism in Serbia and Montenegro than in any other country of Europe. However, this does not mean that there are no recorded cases of anti-Semitism in our country, especially in the media, but these are fortunately mostly isolated incidents. One can not

deny, however, the existence of anti-Semitism in these cases as a transient form of totalitarian political ideas, religious extremism, national-chauvinism and anti-globalism.

In today's world, it is obvious that anti-Semitism is increased by the development of modern technology. It is now easier to reach more people and spread hate speech, racism or xenophobia. Modern technologies, such as the Internet, create an illusion of impunity and anonymity.

We should always bear in mind the huge responsibility of media to promote tolerance since they have the power to create public opinion. These days we witness again the power of media through cinematography –a film may have non-deliberately opened again the subject of anti-Semitism and could be used as a support to anti-Semitic beliefs.

It is important that all OSCE member states promote educational programs for combating anti-Semitism and respect for all ethnic and religious groups. Reform of educational system in both Montenegro and Serbia will comprise the inclusion into curriculum the education on different religions and cultures in a non-biased way.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Fighting anti-Semitism throughout OSCE region is our common commitment. Montenegro and Serbia, as multi-ethnic and multi-religious states, need to preserve and promote harmony and coexistence. I consider one of Montenegro's greatest achievements that good relations between all ethnic and religious groups that have lived for centuries in its territory were preserved and cherished even in the worst of times during war in former Yugoslavia. That is why we strongly support the promotion of inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue and diversity, in which we see the role of OSCE and other international organizations as vital one.

Confident that this conference brings us closer to the goal we all strive for – a better, more tolerant and harmonious society, oblivious to race, color or religion,

I thank you for your attention.