

Ladies and Gentlemen, Excellencies,

It is an honour to be here today and to address you on behalf of the Council of Europe. Romania joined the Council of Europe in 1993 and has continued to make impressive political and economic progress since then, acceding to the European Union in 2007.

Romania has ratified many key Council of Europe conventions, including the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and our “global standard” conventions including those on cybercrime and the protection of women against violence.

The commemoration you are hosting marks another milestone on Romania’s impressive path of societal progress: coming to terms with the darkest period of history, and the Iasi pogrom in particular. Promoting remembrance and honouring the victims is a challenge which you have chosen to embrace with determination and conviction. The appointment of **Alexandru Muraru as Romania’s Special Antisemitism Representative, the designation of a National Holocaust Remembrance Day on 9 October and Romania’s active engagement in the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance** are exemplary and deserve our full support.

Romania, in turn, endorsed my own nomination as the Council of Europe’s first special representative on antisemitic, anti-Muslim and other forms of religious intolerance last November. A common European effort to address antisemitism is clearly necessary, as the alarming incidents of hate crime in recent years – and the escalation of antisemitism in several parts of Europe last month – have painfully shown.

By the end of this year, our anti-discrimination body ECRI will publish a general policy recommendation to all member states

on combatting antisemitism. It will contain guidance on policy making, prevention and the protection of Jewish communities.

Much is already being done, as this conference here demonstrates, but governments can and must increase cooperation to prevent new outbreaks and forms of antisemitism. Two key areas I am focusing on are combatting hate speech on the Internet and preventing antisemitism through education about the Holocaust and its remembrance.

The Council of Europe is preparing a comprehensive recommendation to help governments tackle hate speech from a human rights perspective. The guidance will build on the relevant case-law of the European Court of Human Rights.

Holocaust denial, death threats and incitement to violence against Jews are clearly not covered by the right to freedom of expression. They have to be punished both online and offline. Internet platforms should remove illegal antisemitic and racist content both speedily and systematically.

Teaching about antisemitism and the Holocaust is an integral part of human rights education. The Council of Europe is therefore also working on a recommendation to governments which aims to promote teaching and learning about the history of the Holocaust and to pass on remembrance of the victims. Taking into account that there are fewer and fewer Holocaust survivors to bear direct witness, we propose an inter-disciplinary approach to remembrance, including historical documents, places of remembrance, media, music, art and literature.

Ladies and gentlemen,

all such initiatives at the national and international level are crucial at a time when antisemitism is on the rise. Protecting Jews and Jewish life is part of our common European values. Italy and Romania are demonstrating that impressively today.