

I would like to thank the Hungarian Presidency for their excellent cooperation, including a meeting with State Secretary Peter Sztaray in which we discussed the concept of today's meeting. We also shared our concerns about the persecution of Christians in several parts of the world.

Allow me start by recalling the last informal exchange in March. We had invited speakers from the UN, the OSCE and the President of the French Union of Jewish Students (UEJF), Noémie Madar. In the meeting and in our joint press conference, Ms Madar explained how her organisation had taken Twitter to court because it continues to host *illegal* antisemitic and racist content and provides no information on its *content moderation*.

On 6 July, a Paris court ordered Twitter to submit full details of *how*, and with *what resources*, it moderates such harmful content. The judgment, in my opinion, is a victory for French justice over the attitude of major internet platforms, claiming, until recently, that they were not bound by European law. Holocaust denial, death threats and incitement to violence are *illegal* offline, they must also be banned *online*.

Now, let me briefly summarise my main activities since our last exchange.

Within the Council of Europe, I cooperated closely with ECRI on its new antisemitism Recommendation. With the Parliamentary Assembly, I had a useful exchange with Austrian rapporteur Petra Bayr and have consulted the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner on key issues. My priority is to assist the Secretary General, most recently when she attended the commemoration at Struthof, and with her participation in the Malmö International Forum next month.

Regarding international relations, I continue our trusted cooperation with the EU's antisemitism representative and on my request, the EU Commission kindly agreed to organise a briefing to colleagues here in Strasbourg on the Digital Services Act, which is important in this context.

At the *European* Parliament, I was invited to address the Socialist and Democrat members of the Justice Committee and last week I spoke to the EPP Working Group on 'Intercultural and Religious Dialogue' by invitation of Polish member Jan Olbrycht and Hungarian member György Hölvényi.

I have now had fruitful exchanges with all three OSCE Personal Representatives (of the Chairperson-in-Office) and last week, with Ambassador Mehmet Pacaci, on Combating Intolerance against Muslims.

I participated in several seminars including on Countering Hate Speech through *Interfaith* Cooperation, supported by the OSCE-ODIHR.

Interreligious dialogue was also on the agenda when the Secretary General met Holy See Secretary of State, Cardinal Parolin.

By invitation of the *Israeli* Foreign Ministry, I spoke online at the 7th Global Forum for Combatting Antisemitism.

I am truly delighted that Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt is here today and that I can address the Conference of European Rabbis in November.

As regards *bilateral co-operation*, I had a very productive meeting with Sophie Elizéon, the head of the French anti-discrimination body DILCRAH, who will issue a new strategy to combat antisemitism and racism in October.

I am grateful to Ambassadors Harry Rusz, Marie Fontanel and Gerhard Jandl for their interventions at the Conference of *French* Rabbis in Strasbourg, which demonstrated that we stand united in the fight against antisemitism.

On her farewell from Strasbourg, Ambassador Elisabeth Walaas presented me with the new *Norwegian* action plan against antisemitism. This clear and concise plan explicitly mentions the work of the Council of Europe and the role of the Special Representative. I would also like to thank Ambassador Corina Călugăru for briefing me on Moldova's antisemitism action plan - and take this opportunity to thank *all* delegations including Ukraine, Slovakia and Italy, who have informed me about developments or invited me to commemorations.

One of the most significant commemorations so far this year took place on 29 June in Romania to mark the 80th anniversary of the pogrom of Iasi in which 13,000 Jews were killed within just 3 days. The event was supported by a large diplomatic presence. In my interventions in Iasi, I emphasised that coming to terms with the darkest period of history was part of societal progress ... and protecting Jewish life and heritage are part of our common European values. The city of Iasi and Romania demonstrated that *impressively*.

I would like to thank the Romanian government for the invitation and Ambassador Răzvan Rusu for his support.

My mandate is to raise awareness and represent the Council of Europe's work. When necessary, I have also *taken positions*. Following a wave of attacks on Jewish citizens and synagogues in mid-May, notably in Germany and in the UK, I published an opinion article emphasising that the escalation of antisemitic attacks urgently required a Europe-wide response. The article was published in 9 member states.

Anti-Muslim hatred online is also a major concern. As there is currently little empirical research in Europe, I undertook a survey of national Muslim associations in 8 member states to assess the current nature and dimension of anti-Muslim abuse *on the Internet*. The results are not fully representative, but they *do* indicate a *dangerous trend*: Hate speech against Muslims is *growing* and much of it is criminally relevant, involving incitement to violence and death threats. Most hate messages are still sent anonymously, but increasingly right-wing and anti-immigrant groups, and so so-called identity movements, post racial slur on named accounts. The majority of respondents state that online hate is *at least as dangerous* as traditional forms of discrimination. All respondents believe the authorities are not doing enough to stop it. Underreporting of attacks is significant.

The survey was widely covered in the international media and submitted to ECRI in view of its forthcoming Recommendation on anti-Muslim racism.

My views on the so-called “Islam Map” in Austria are also well documented in the international press. I would like to thank Ambassador Gerhard Jandl for facilitating my dialogue with the Austrian authorities including at cabinet level. During my mission to Vienna (where I also received a copy of the new national antisemitism strategy) I emphasised the value of Austria’s state-supported *interreligious* platform of 16 religious communities in upholding freedom of religion and religious practices, especially during the pandemic.

I am convinced that interreligious dialogue and *education* on the respect of *Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion* - Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights - can make a meaningful contribution to address some of the issues I have outlined. I look forward to exploring this further during the Italian Presidency.