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*(Informacje)*INFORMACJE INSTYTUCJI, ORGANÓW I JEDNOSTEK ORGANIZACYJNYCH
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PEŁNE SPRAWOZDANIE Z OBRAD 26 STYCZNIA 2023 R.

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PEŁNE SPRAWOZDANIE Z OBRAD 26 STYCZNIA 2023 R.

PRESIDENZA: ROBERTA METSOLA

President

1. Wznowienie sesji

President. – I declare resumed the session of the European Parliament adjourned on Thursday 19 January 2023.

2. Otwarcie posiedzenia

(The sitting opened at 10:36)

3. Skład Parlamentu

President. – The competent authorities of Slovakia have notified me of the election of Katarína Roth Neveďalová to the European Parliament replacing Miroslav Číž with effect from 30 December 2022.

I wish to welcome our new colleague and recall that she takes her seat in Parliament and its bodies in full enjoyment of her rights pending the verification of her credentials.

4. Skład grup politycznych

President. – Daniela Rondinelli has left the non-attached Members and joined the S&D Group as of 25 January 2023.

5. Porządek obrad

President. – The agenda for this special session is adopted.

6. Uroczyste posiedzenie - Międzynarodowy Dzień Pamięci o Ofiarach Holokaustu

President. – Dear Members, dear colleagues, we gather here today for this solemn ceremony to mark the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, in the presence of the President of the State of Israel. President Herzog, welcome to the European Parliament.

(Applause)

Before we begin I would like to invite you to turn your attention to the screens to watch a short video in remembrance of all the victims of the Holocaust.

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(A video was shown in the Chamber)

President. – President Herzog, distinguished guests, dear colleagues, every year around 27 January, the world remembers the millions of innocent men, women and children who were murdered in history's greatest crime. A crime intended to wipe off a people from the earth. A crime designed to inflict horror on generations. A crime that has shaped our modern European project into an embodiment of the timeless promise: never again.

It was a crime that saw six million Jewish people murdered for being Jewish; that saw Roma and Sinti people targeted; that saw LGBTI communities eradicated and so many others humiliated and killed because of their ethnicity, disability, identity, race or beliefs.

It is difficult to imagine the horrors of the Holocaust and the actions that led up to it. The fear of mothers and fathers, the quiet suffering of so many. The little children forced to hide in holes, in basements and attics. The Rabbis who remained dignified as they were forced to scrub pavements while crowds laughed and mocked. The impossible choices faced by so many every day in so many Member States.

The Holocaust did not happen overnight. 'Auschwitz did not fall from the sky' as survivor Marian Turski said three years ago. The alarm bells should have rung before.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks gave a lecture in 2012 where he said one of the things that haunted him about the Holocaust was the horror of the silence. 'Where were the voices? Where were protests?' he asked. This was done in living memory. In the age of enlightenment, rationalism, science and art and culture. This did not happen in a frenzy of hate: it took time, it was built up. The dehumanisation process started before the camps. And what was truly horrifying, he said, is the almost total absence of horror at the time.

His appeal was for us to 'resolve that if the moment comes, we will stand up and speak out, so that no one will have reason to say: when we cried, you were not listening; when we suffered, you were silent'. This is why, even if it is hard to describe these crimes, we must keep speaking; why we must never forget.

We must speak because ours is the last generation to receive first-hand accounts from survivors of the Holocaust. Our duty becomes even greater when the voices of those survivors cannot be heard any longer. It is our responsibility to remember and to pass down testimonies to future generations, to educate.

We must speak because despite decades of effort, anti-Semitism still exists. Hate still finds too many voices excusing it. Too many families in Europe and around the world live with packed suitcases by their door. We cannot allow anyone to find comfort in ignorance.

Let me repeat what I said in the Knesset: to be anti-Semitic is to be anti-European.

Our first woman President, Simone Veil, was herself a survivor – who grew up to change the face of Europe – and her legacy is present in these halls and buildings. She understood that 'neutrality only helps the oppressor'. And the European Parliament will always take a side: the side of respect, the side of human dignity, the side of equality, the side of hope.

This Parliament is proud that we have not been silent. Not when it comes to fighting hate and discrimination. Not when it comes to anti-Semitism and religious freedom. And we will keep acting to ensure that our communities are not marginalised by exclusion, hatred or indifference.

We have not been silent when it came to standing up for our values. Nor when it comes to Russia's aggression in Ukraine and the rhetoric used to try to justify it. Neither have we been silent when it comes to the regime in Iran who execute young people standing up for women, life and liberty.

Ladies and gentlemen, tomorrow marks 78 years since the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. A liberation from evil that proved that despite everything, hope endures. Even when all around is hopelessness. The same hope that led to the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel 75 years ago this year. A nation that has endured, flourished and sustained a democracy despite all odds.

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President Herzog, as I said in Israel, the bond between the people of Europe and the people of Israel has been forged in the horror of our common history. A bond whose strength lies in its openness, honesty, straightforwardness – even criticism – but a bond that has and will withstand the test of time.

And yet, our people share more than history and a promise to remember. We also share a common destiny – and a future that will endure.

We will now listen to a musical interlude.

(Jenő Lisztes (cimbalom) played 'Lament' by Laci Rácz.)

President. – I will now give the floor to His Excellency Mr Isaac Herzog, President of the State of Israel, for his address.

President Herzog, the floor is yours.

Isaac Herzog, President of the State of Israel. – *(The following is a transcription of the interpretation of the original speech from Hebrew into English)* In 1946, my grandfather and namesake, the Chief Rabbi of the Land of Israel, Rabbi Dr Yitzhak Isaac HaLevi Herzog, embarked on a search and rescue mission looking for his Jewish brethren all across the ravaged continent of Europe. As he looked around him, he saw not only smouldering heaps of stone and sand, but also the silent cry of a down-trodden nation. The lives of millions of men, women and children had come to an end, and in their stead he saw only crumbling stone. In Warsaw, home to over half a million Jews before the Holocaust, only the Jewish cemetery remained to attest to the vibrant life that had flourished before the advent of the Nazi regime.

The Nożyk Synagogue on Twarda Street was the only Jewish synagogue that remained in Warsaw, and a few dozen souls gathered, snatched from the jaws of carnage. A bloodstained Torah scroll was handed to my grandfather by the survivors to be taken to the Land of Israel for eternal memory. The former cantor of the Great Synagogue of Warsaw, Moshe Koussevitzky, stood to recite a traditional Jewish prayer for the departed, '*El Malei Rachamim*', 'O God who art full of compassion.' Only this time, the wording of the prayer was different than usual. It was different because my grandfather rewrote the prayer in order to express – if there's any way to express – the pain, loss and grief that came in the wake of the destruction that had unfolded before his eyes. He rewrote it and appealed to God and asked him to grant rest to our brothers and sisters, victims of the horrific Holocaust after the thousand painful deathly blows that they had suffered on this earth.

I stand before you today as the President of the State of Israel, the democratic nation-state of the Jewish People, but my heart and thoughts are with my brothers and sisters who were killed in the Holocaust. Their only crime was being Jewish and the humanity inside them. They were beloved and cherished. They dared to hope and dream even in the midst of devastation. In their memory, I will begin my remarks with this traditional prayer:

'O God, who art full of compassion, who dwellest on high, grant perfect rest on the wings of the Divine Presence, on the pinnacles of the holy and the pure, which shine like the radiance of the firmament, to the souls of the six million Jews, victims of the Holocaust, who were killed, suffocated, burned, and martyred by the German murderers and their accomplices from other nations. Therefore, may the compassionate one shelter them forever in the safety of His wings and bind their souls in the eternal bonds of life. God is their portion. May their resting place be in the Garden of Eden. And may they stand for their fate at the end of days. Let us say: Amen.'

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Madam President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola; Madam President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen; honoured Members of the European Parliament, Ambassadors, Members of Parliament, representatives of the Jewish world, ladies and gentlemen, on the afternoon of 23 July 1944, the Jews of the Greek island of Rhodes stood in a long line as they faced the western wall of the old city. The rest of the city's population was forbidden to step outside. The Nazis were not sated by the elimination of the glorious Jewish communities of Thessaloniki and other cities in Greece, home to 98% of the Jews of Greece. In this way, from that holding site, over 1 600 Jews from Rhodes were loaded onto three old cargo vessels led by SS officers. For eight days and nights, in a nightmarish sea voyage, in a monstrous odyssey, the Jews of Rhodes sailed at sea. The heat was intense. The food was meagre. Seven people were killed during the voyage and their bodies were thrown into the sea.

Another ship was sent to the island of Kos to pick up nearly 100 Jews, and another ship was sent to the island of Leros, a small remote island, in order to hunt down the only Jew who lived there. Only one man. That was the whole Jewish community of Leros, one solitary single Jew. He was the last one. His name was Daniel Rachamim. *Rachamim*, the Hebrew word for compassion, *Rachamim* as in the prayer 'El Malei Rachamim', 'O God who art full of compassion'. The compassion that he never received.

This seemingly small, horrifying hunting expedition by the Nazi monster for a single person, the last Jew in a backwater place, tells the story of the entire Holocaust. The story of the total annihilation, eradication and obliteration. The story of the monstrous, deranged obsession to totally exterminate a nation whose roots stretched back in history; they were an inseparable and essential part of Europe, the Jewish People. 'Why did you take a single person, why did you go through all this trouble?' asked Daniel Rachamim. He did not know that for the Nazis, his mere existence was a crime punishable by death. That in his case, 'being' was a crime.

The people aboard these ships reached Athens after an arduous journey and from there they were loaded onto cattle wagons. Their destination was the Auschwitz extermination camp. Daniel Rachamim, the last Jew from Leros, finished off this procession.

Ladies and gentlemen, there are some dates in history that go beyond the boundaries of time and become memorial sites. In 1945, the 27th of January went from being just another date to becoming a memorial site, when in the afternoon, the gates of hell were burst open. Five horrible years later, the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp, the largest death factory in human history, was liberated by the soldiers of the Red Army and stopped operating. Snow covered the blood-drenched soil. In Buchenwald, in Dachau, in Theresienstadt, Bergen-Belsen, and in so many, many other places, the horrors continued for several months until they were liberated.

My father, the sixth President of the State of Israel, Chaim Herzog, was at the time an officer in the British Army. He was born in Ireland. He had the privilege of landing at Normandy. He crossed the Rhine and took part in the liberation of the Netherlands, Belgium and the north of Germany. I will never forget how he described to me the horrors that unfolded before his eyes as one of the first liberators of the death camps, including Bergen-Belsen. The human skeletons in the striped pyjamas, the hell on Earth, the stench, the heart of darkness. Millions of worlds, one third of the Jewish People, were wiped out in the killing pits, in the gas chambers, in the furnaces, in the death camps.

'All of this is simply incomprehensible', wrote Etty Hillesum, a young woman from Holland, before she was murdered in Auschwitz in November 1943. 'The skies are full of birds. The purple lupins stand up so regally and peacefully. The sun is shining on my face. And right before our eyes, mass murder is being carried out.'

In the Nazis' despicable 'Final Solution', they sought to rip at Europe's own flesh and blood. For just as humanity would not be what it is without Europe, in the same way, Europe could not be what it is without the Jews. Can anyone imagine Europe without the theories of Sigmund Freud, without the genius of Albert Einstein or Emmy Noether? Could there be a Europe without the echoes of the thoughts of Karl Marx? How can we conceive of European philosophy without Baruch Spinoza or Henri Bergson, or the spirit of European culture without Amedeo Modigliani or Franz Kafka? However, anti-Semitism, like an autoimmune disease, made Europe attack part of its own DNA, and a shared history going back millennia was erased as if it had never existed.

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Honourable Members of the European Parliament, the Holocaust was not born in a vacuum. We should never forget that the Nazi death machine would not have managed to carry out its nightmarish vision had it not met soil fertilised with Jew-hatred, which is as old as time itself. The stereotypical depiction of Jews had struck roots in Europe for centuries, before the rise of the Nazis, for generations. Nazi ideology intensified traditional anti-Semitism and primordial fears fanned the flames of hatred. Even before a single extermination camp was built, in the minds of the masses, the Jew was already human dust – a subhuman. It is precisely for this reason, precisely because the Holocaust was based on much older anti-Semitic foundations that had taken root and flourished in Europe, that this dark abyss is a terrible, profound and compelling lesson for the whole of Europe.

As we stand here today in the beating heart of the European Union, we understand very well the mission of memory that we all share. We recognise the fact that at the memorial site to which we make pilgrimage, we must remember not only the Holocaust and the destruction, but also the sacred alliance forged alongside this horrific disaster. We need to sanctify the memory of the victims. We need to ensure the welfare of the survivors who are still amongst us. We need to teach and educate about the lessons of the historic catastrophe that was the Holocaust, and we need to prevent any repetition of these ghastly crimes.

Today we see movements on the extremes of European and world politics. They proudly raise the ugly banner of anti-Semitism, which once more threatens to turn democratic and civilised societies into societies that devour their own people. Unfortunately, the picture is very deeply troubling. Anti-Semitic discourse festers not only within dark regimes, but within the heartlands of the free democratic West. Jew-hatred still exists. Anti-Semitism still exists. Holocaust denial still exists.

The latest reports point to new records of hatred, as anti-Semitism continues to don new guises – and this time it is active. It is alive and kicking, on virtual platforms as well. Throughout the internet, viral anti-Semitism is spreading at a record pace, at the click of a button, and the distance between a viral video and a physical attack hardly exists at all. The distance between a Facebook post and the smashing of headstones in a cemetery is shorter than we would like to think. Deranged tweets can kill. They can actually kill. Anti-Semites draw inspiration and ideas from virtual platforms. They are brainwashed and enraged as a result of unrestrained and unchecked online discourse.

I stand before you – you who in your identities, positions and beliefs represent Europe's impressive diversity – at the height of this sacred gathering and in the heart of a place that has always championed partnership in the war against darkness and evil, and the joining of hands to uphold our most basic core moral and human values. And I call on you, elected officials of Europe: do not stand by!

You must read the warning signs, detect the symptoms of the pandemic of anti-Semitism, and fight it at all costs. You must ensure that every Jew wanting to live a full Jewish life in your countries may do so safely and without fear. It is up to you and your countries to use every tool at your disposal, from education, legislation to security and enforcement, in order to deter and eradicate hatred, racism and anti-Semitism in every form. You must instil across Europe the understanding that the Jewish people's right to a national and sovereign self-determination is sacred and manifested in our democratic state, the State of Israel. This is why, amongst other things, you must move to fully adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism.

From this plenary, I wish to underscore that there is a fine line between criticism of the State of Israel and negation of the State of Israel's existence. It is, of course, acceptable to criticise the state that I head. It is fine to criticise us and it is fine to disagree with us. Our country is open to criticism, like all members of the family of nations, and Israeli democracy certainly excels in fierce and penetrating internal criticism. However – and this is the important and critical difference – criticism of the State of Israel must not cross the line into negation of the very existence of the State of Israel, the nation-state of the Jewish people, as recognised by the institutions of the international community.

Casting doubt on the nation-state of the Jewish people's right to exist is not legitimate diplomacy. It is anti-Semitism in the full sense of the word, and it must be thoroughly uprooted.

(Applause)

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The rule is simple: criticism of us must pass the basic test of fairness and integrity, and it must not cross the line into dehumanisation or delegitimisation.

The State of Israel rose like a phoenix out of the ashes and the terrible destruction and realised our historic right to a state in our ancient homeland. In a few months, we will celebrate the 75th Independence Day of our country, whose immense contribution to humanity and to Europe in particular – in countless fields including science, agriculture, energy, security, technology, culture, health, education and so much more – is an established fact.

We have withstood enormous challenges over many years. We have absorbed waves of Jewish immigration from over 100 countries from all corners of the earth. We have established a resilient and democratic society comprised of an unparalleled human mosaic of Jews and Arabs, people of every religion and faith. We have proven that we can take any action at any time and in every place, to protect our citizens and the Jewish People as a whole. We have courageously weathered attacks by our enemies, and no less importantly, we have extended a hand in peace and have forged unprecedented alliances, including the peace accords such as the Abraham Accords, which have transformed and continue to dramatically transform the Middle East. I pray for the day when we can reach the same with our Palestinian neighbours as well.

An essential and fundamental part of our state's growth rests on the close and iron-clad ties and alliances with European states and the institutions of the European Union. The State of Israel and Europe are bound together in an unbreakable bond. Our shared interests, and even more so, our shared values, dictate our present and shape our future. Liberty, equality, justice, peace: these are the fundamental values enshrined in the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel, which we shall uphold and defend at any cost, and these are also the core values of the European Union.

I stand here today not only looking at the past, but also for the sake of the future, for the sake of our shared prosperity so that we may act in true partnership, so that we may overcome further challenges together. I call on you and your nations to move to broaden and deepen and strengthen our partnership. There is so much that we can and must do together for our sake, for the sake of the future, and for the sake of future generations.

This is a time of trial for all of us. If we believe that the voice of justice has not been silenced, if we believe in another more compassionate humanity, we must work together as a single community, determined and cohesive against the forces of darkness and hatred that threaten to destroy us.

As President of the State of Israel, I speak first and foremost of the Iranian regime, which not only publicly calls for the complete annihilation of my country, the State of Israel, but is also murdering its own countrymen and women who are demanding liberty and human and civil rights. It is also stoking civil wars throughout the Middle East, playing an active and lethal role in the war in Ukraine against Ukrainian citizens and developing weapons of mass destruction on the way to dramatically threatening the stability of the entire globe.

To finish, my friends, until Etty Hillesum, the young poet I quoted at the beginning of my speech, was murdered in the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau a month and a half before her 30th birthday, she kept writing in her diary. Etty wrote about the orphaned children forced to grow up too early, about the love of mankind that had withered and about how much she wanted to live. In her beautiful, moving words she wrote the following: 'One day we shall be building a whole new world. Against every new outrage and very fresh horror we shall put up one more piece of love and goodness.' Love and goodness: that was her dying wish; that was her legacy; that is our duty to pursue – all of us together.

'May it be Your will, Master of Peace, King to whom peace belongs, to set peace among your Israel, your people, and may peace grow until peace is drawn upon every person in the world.' This is a Jewish prayer.

May the memory of the victims of the Holocaust be eternally etched in our hearts. And may their souls be bound in the bond of life. Amen.

(The House rose and accorded the speaker a standing ovation)

President. – Dear colleagues, kindly remain standing.

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(The House observed a minute's silence)

We shall now conclude the ceremony with some music.

(Chen Halevi (clarinet) and Jenő Lisztes (cimbalom) played 'Kaddish' by Maurice Ravel.)

President. – Let me remind you, dear colleagues, that the inauguration of the permanent Holocaust memorial in our House will start at 11:45 in front of the Hemicycle just outside here.

7. Zatwierdzenie protokołu bieżącego posiedzenia: patrz protokół

8. Kalendarz następnych posiedzeń: patrz protokół

9. Zamknięcie posiedzenia

(The sitting closed at 11:24)

10. Przerwa w obradach

President. – I declare adjourned the session of the European Parliament.