

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nikos Dendias, remarks at the Webinar co-organised by Greece, Austria and the Republic of North Macedonia on «Practical Implementation of the Three Legally Non-Binding IHRA Working Definitions» (19.05.2021)

It is a pleasure and a privilege for me to address today this Educational Webinar.

It focuses on the practical Implementation of the three legally non-binding IHRA working definitions in multicultural societies.

I warmly salute, my dear colleagues, Ministers Bujar Osmani of North Macedonia and Karoline Edstadler of Austria.

I would also like to warmly greet the webinar participants from South East European countries;

They are here to contribute with their knowledge to the educators that will teach the younger generations.

This is a noble enterprise by itself.

It is also, in a way, an act of self-defense, for our modern democratic societies and our free and dignified way of life.

The blood shed by our fellow Jewish citizens, not so long ago, targeted for no other reason than their faith.

This blood should serve both as reminder and as a warning that we should stay ever vigilant.

Greece was the first EU State to translate into law the Working Definitions on Antisemitism and on Holocaust Denial and Distortion.

We have already adopted legislation going even beyond the IHRA's working definition on anti-Roma concepts and activities.

Therefore, we have already accumulated experience on all these fields.

In this vein, we are more than willing to share this experience with others and especially with our friends and neighbors.

This, in fact, would be a most interesting exercise, from the scientific and methodological point of view.

The Holocaust in Greece and in our northern neighbour followed almost identical paths, for the same reasons.

Sadly, they ended up, in similar results, despite:

- the wholesale rejection of racial motives by societies in both countries and
- the active involvement of resistance movements and even police forces in countering the Nazi plans.

What happened in our part of the world had, of course, parallels in the rest of Europe.

At the same time, there were marked differences, that often made for a different story.

These features are those that make this webinar so interesting and so important; even more so, as this event is a pre-accession activity North Macedonia is undertaking, in her effort to be accepted as a full member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

A prospect that Greece embraces and hopes that it will gain consensus among her fellow IHRA members.

Greece is also aware of the rise of Antisemitism worldwide during the current pandemic crisis.

For this reason, it is our decision to encourage greater cooperation with other countries in preventing and responding to Antisemitism.

A final word of thanks, to:

- Ambassador Tegovski, National Coordinator and Head of the Delegation of North Macedonia,
- Ambassador Baier, Special Envoy of Austria to IHRA and
- Mrs. Hannah Lessing,

for their unsparing work in bringing this important scientific and educational project to fruition. -