



**Remarks**

**by**

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**President of the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations**

**General Assembly**

**The International Day of Commemoration in  
Memory of Victims of the Holocaust**

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Excellencies,  
Secretary-General,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed fitting that our first formal plenary session for 2014 is on this day, the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, the theme of which is: “Journeys through the Holocaust.”

Eight years ago, our Assembly of Nations adopted a resolution to honour those who suffered immeasurable hatred, cruelty, prejudice and discrimination during the Holocaust. As an international community, we agreed that such unfathomable horror and unspeakable cruelty would have no place in this world. We expressed our commitment to ensuring that our world never slips down such a treacherous path again by remaining aware and vigilant, and by teaching the terrible lessons of the Holocaust to younger generations.

Today, we are gathered here, to bear witness for all those who were brutalized, who suffered and who died, and we are also here to bear witness so that we the living never allow such a terrible tragedy to occur in our shared human history.

And it is therefore only fitting that we remember the wise and poignant words of the Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel, whose lifelong commitment to peace and human dignity we forever applaud, who said [quote]:

*“For the survivor who chooses to testify, it is clear: his duty is to bear witness for the dead and for the living. He has no right to deprive future generations of a past that belongs to our collective memory. To forget would be not only dangerous but offensive; to forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time.”*

Distinguished Guests,

As we reflect on the theme for this year's commemoration, we call to mind the fear and agony of those deported to concentration camps, often separated from their families forever; the gruelling years of incarceration and inhumane conditions; and for those who survived, the shock and exhilaration of freedom after years of captivity and deprivation, followed by the burden of starting anew with fresh and deeply embedded mental and physical scars.

The Journey of the Holocaust is one that most of us in this room will only know second-hand. We know about it through the brave stories of those who lived it and have come back and told us of the horrors they faced. Their stories shocked our collective conscience, and their bravery and courage touched our hearts.

Excellencies,

As we all know, in December, we lost a great hero of our time. From all corners of the world, we heard praise and adulation for Nelson Mandela and his human qualities that enabled him as an individual to transcend the unbearable and the unjust. If we look at those who survived the "Journey through the Holocaust," we find individuals who have exhibited similar courage, resilience and determination. Individuals like Alice Herz-Sommer, the world's oldest Holocaust survivor, who at age 110, continues to inspire people with her musical talent and determined spirit.

Today, we pay tribute to the dead and the living- to those who lived to tell their stories, as well as the countless many who never had the opportunity – those whose lights were snuffed out needlessly and cruelly before their time.

We will not forget them, we have not forgotten them, and they have not left us in vain.

The sheer ferocity and pervasive cruelty of the Holocaust brought to fore a deep and powerful moral imperative that crimes of such enormity must be forever eliminated from

this planet. This moral imperative calls on the international community to ensure that this horrendous crime against humanity, including various subsequent derivatives thereof, must never be repeated in any way, shape or form.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sixty-eight years ago, this organization was founded in the wake of the terrible tragedies and ravages of war and its Charter echoed a global longing for peace and cooperation amongst nations. By staying true to the values of the UN Charter and remaining committed to ending horrific crimes that violate human dignity, we are duty-bound to testify and bear witness that the suffering of the Holocaust will never be repeated, and the memories of those who suffered will be forever honoured.

Thank you.

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