



Denmark
Permanent Mission to the
United Nations

UNGA75 high-level side event

” The Role of the United Nations in Combating Antisemitism ”

17 November 2020 10:00 a.m. EST

PLEDGE BY DENMARK

“We have promised to protect the Jews, to protect the Danish Jews. It is my intention to honour that commitment”. There is an unbroken line from this statement by Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen in September this year to the pastoral letter from the Danish Bishops in 1943 issued under the fear of an imminent deportation of Danish Jews to German concentration camps. A letter, which priests read out loud in all Danish churches on October 3 1943:

’Wherever Jews are being persecuted it is the duty of Christians to protest’, the letter stated. ‘Race and religion should never become a pretext to deprive people of their rights, freedoms nor property’, it continued. The letter also admonished that ‘Notwithstanding our different religious views, we will fight for our Jewish brothers and sisters to maintain the same freedom, which we cherish more than our own lives.’

That the vast majority of the Jewish community in Denmark was brought to safety in neutral Sweden over the following days and weeks by an improvised fleet of small fishing boats is now history. Proud history. The action saved more than 95 percent of all Danish Jews who after years of exile came back to their untouched homes in Denmark in 1945.

On this note, I thank you for the opportunity to address this high-level event on mainstreaming the combating of antisemitism within the UN system. This is an important platform to discuss how to step up the fight against antisemitism through the UN system, which, founded on the horrors and sufferings of the Second World War, still has the global lead in promoting human rights and protecting vulnerable groups.

In November 2019, Denmark hosted an official visit of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Anti-Semitism, Rabbi Baker. Rabbi Baker highlighted the permanent physical protection of the Jewish community, including schools and synagogues, and the close cooperation between the government and the Jewish community as “the Danish model”, which he found could serve as an inspiration for other countries in the fight against anti-Semitism.

Sadly, antisemitism is on the rise. Globally, in Europe, and in my own country, Denmark. Consequently, in 2019 the Danish government decided to prepare a national action plan to combat antisemitism. Planned to be launched early 2021, the plan will also deal with Denmark’s participation in the international fight against antisemitism.

With the necessary reservations, I can mention that in the action plan, we also expect to devise concrete steps to combat antisemitism through the UN. To mention one example we expect to address antisemitism at the Universal Periodic Review process in a more systematic manner and give country specific recommendations where relevant. Another example is to actively engage in cooperation with Special Procedure mandate holders on matters related to antisemitism and submitting all relevant information without delay. We look forward to presenting the full range of initiatives with the launch of the action plan.

Thank you!