INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE ALLIANCE

2019 LUXEMBOURG CHAIRMANSHIP

IHRA Chair Statement on shooting in Hanau, Germany

The racially motivated murders of 9 people in Hanau, Germany, leaves us deeply troubled. It is difficult to find words to express the sadness, anger and shock we feel in the face of such a despicable act just a few weeks after we commemorated the victims of the Holocaust, the unprecedented genocide that left deep scars in all European societies.

In the name of all 34 Member Countries of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, I express my sincere condolences to all those who lost loved ones in the deadly shooting.

The attack in Hanau is the latest in a long line of deadly incidents that were motivated by ideologies of hatred, such as antisemitism, Islamophobia, anti-Gypsyism and other forms of racism: Hanau, New York, Halle, San Diego, Pittsburgh, Christchurch. We cannot pretend that these murderous assaults fell from the sky. Right-wing extremism is on the rise in too many of our countries. In its extreme, this leads to the killing of people and we can no longer stand idly by. People are being killed in their homes, places of worship, restaurants and in the streets of our cities. These are also attacks on all of us, on our democratic freedom.

It is often said that words do not kill. But we know from the past and we see it again that discriminatory language and hate speech pave the way for physical attacks and murder.

We have to stand up against right-wing extremism and all other murderous ideologies as governments, individuals and civil society. On 19 January 2020, our Member Countries adopted the 2020 IHRA Ministerial Declaration and pledged to counter “all forms of racism and discrimination that undermine fundamental democratic principles”.

While these are also words, we need these words to guide us in the fight against the hatred that motivated the racist killing of 9 people in Germany. This fight has to take place now. We owe this to the victims, their families and friends. While words do not kill, silence does. If we want to secure our open, democratic societies, we have to take concrete action in order to defend the values that allow us to live in peace, prosperity and dignity.