



# FRANCE

## 60<sup>ème</sup> Assemblée Générale des Nations Unies

### *Mémoire de l'Holocauste*

Intervention de S.E. M. Philippe Douste-Blazy,  
Ministre des Affaires Etrangères de la France

(Vérifier au prononcé)

New York, le 31 octobre 2005

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## 60<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Assembly

### *Holocaust Remembrance*

Statement by H.E. Mr. Philippe Douste-Blazy  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of France

(Check against delivery)

New York, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005

**(UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION)**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I take the floor to speak in France's name, let me to say how moved I am. To speak of the Holocaust is not a banal or trivial matter. As Primo Levi said in his magisterial work, *If This Is a Man*, the Shoah is about man, his dignity and freedom. We who have gathered in this forum are all linked by the memory and history of the Holocaust: the United Nations came into existence out of the rejection of barbarism and Nazi violence. It enshrines, in its founding charter, the values which bring us together and are the foundations of this Assembly, values which are characterized by the rejection of extermination, which forcefully reject what happened in Europe. The strength of multilateralism, which this forum expresses, is to build the future of peoples on all the lessons learned from the past. Some could say after the Shoah that *they did not know*; today, it is no longer possible to say *one did not know*.

Remembrance of the Holocaust today is our responsibility. It is to build our future on the knowledge and clear conscience of the past; it is also to uphold **a certain idea of man**.

France, like all its European partners, strongly supported the decision to hold the special session last January to commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps.

Sixty years ago, the horror-struck Allies put an end to the extermination camps, those places of death whose names remain forever engraved in our memories: Belzec, Sobibor, Majdanek, Treblinka, Auschwitz.

This 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary has been marked by events and commemorations throughout the year; the most moving being the international ceremony at Auschwitz. All these events were a forceful expression of the international community's duty to remember.

In the face of a "radical evil," a plan for systematic extermination, in the face of the negationism that sometimes surfaces in one place or another, all mankind must remember and remain vigilant. So it is for this Assembly, which expresses the universal conscience but also the wish for peace and concord among nations, to send a clear message. That is what we wanted to signal on January 27 in this General Assembly. And that is what we wish to reaffirm today.

France, like its European partners, is co-sponsoring this draft resolution on the Holocaust.

We have two fundamental reasons for this commitment. The first has to do with the duty to remember. In July 1995, in his speech at the Vel d'Hiv, the President of the French Republic, Jacques Chirac, recognized the responsibility of the French State in collaborating with the occupying power in the destruction it wrought. Then he strongly affirmed that collective memory is an imprescriptible principle. He also affirmed an ethical imperative—collectively shared remembrance.

My country was thus behind the initiative to designate January 27 as the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Shoah. The idea was adopted in 2002 by the

Council of Europe and has since been taken up by many States and other international organizations, including the OSCE.

By tabling today's draft resolution, the United Nations salutes the designation of January 27 as the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

There is however another reason why France fully approves the initiative before us. The duty to remember, 60 years after the tragedy, must now be directed to new generations. The last Holocaust survivors are leaving us. Only a handful of them now remain. If the duty to remember is to be passed on today, then our duty is to educate--and this will be even more true for the future. If a crime analogous to genocide is not to happen again in the future, the flame of memory must not be extinguished and must be passed from generation to generation.

This is more than a necessity imposed by the barbarism of the past; it is a responsibility to history. My country long ago introduced Holocaust education in our school system. France is also endeavoring to promote this priority in all European forums. It is doing so in the International Task Force for Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF), which was set up following the Stockholm Declaration of January 2000. It did so at the OSCE conference in 2004 and took the initiative within the European Union for launching a dialogue of education ministers on this subject.

The international community has already taken a major legal step—which we welcome—by adopting the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. But it is also through teaching, regular contact with places of remembrance and education that we must awaken future generations. All over the world, these actions can help combat religious intolerance, racism, incitement to violence and discrimination. At the same time as the education of new generations is rooted in history, it involves the future of the world and mankind.

For this reason, it is necessary that, after solemnly marking the commemoration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Holocaust at the end of 2005, the United Nations should adopt the draft resolution before you today. The text salutes the designation by many States of January 27 as a day of commemoration and enshrines it as a day of international observance. It also has the great merit of calling upon States to build on this day of remembrance by working to educate future generations.

The duty to remember requires us to be vigilant today and calls on us to act. Remembrance can never be taken for granted, it is a duty that must be constantly renewed. It requires States to mobilize with all people of goodwill involved in education and the training of new generations. This is the meaning of our support for the draft resolution before the United Nations General Assembly today./.