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**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Jorge Skinner-Klée,  
Permanent Representative of Guatemala to the United Nations  
Item 72: Holocaust Remembrance**

New York, October 31, 2005

Mr. President:

We are gathered here today in remembrance of the victims of the Holocaust (shoa), innocent human beings victims of ethnic and racial hatred, of political and social intolerance. The shoa is the most appalling horror suffered by humanity in the twentieth century: the execrable extermination of over one third of the Jewish people, along with countless members of other minorities, who died unjustly and cruelly, murdered for the sole reason that they were different, only because they were not understood or tolerated.

This abominable outrage will forever burden the conscience of humanity and all nations, which belatedly realized that hatred, fanaticism, racism and prejudices lead but to the negation of life and to all that debases the human person. This is why the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes that freedom, justice and peace in the world are based on recognition of the intrinsic dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all human beings, while disregard and contempt for human rights have been the cause of barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of humankind.

The present remembrance calls to our mind the saddest and most hateful outrage inflicted on any people, an unjustifiable tragedy that humanity must not forget, on pain of once again having to suffer its horrendous and wanton evil. During the ceremonies held to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau in southern Poland, Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, ex-foreign minister of that country, reminded us, on behalf of the survivors, that Polish resistance had drawn the free world's attention to the situation in Auschwitz-Birkenau, but that "no country in the world had adequately reacted to the gravity of the situation." We are now engaged in a solemn act of remembrance, not only in order to alert future generations, but also, and fundamentally, to forge a new conscience of peoples for the purpose of ensuring that no such ignominious crime will ever recur or be the object of complicit silence: Never again!.

Mr. President:

The circumstances that can lead a powerful social group to seek to annihilate another, weaker group or to display intolerance toward it, can result from diverse and complex factors; some of them can arise from perverse ideologies, others from religious fanaticisms or racist doctrines; they can also reflect nothing more than fear. They all share a common characteristic, namely ignorance, which is just a disguised form of intolerance. This has driven certain social groups to act irrationally, thus committing the most inhuman and aberrant acts imaginable, such as genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, anti-semitism and xenophobia.

Useful and peaceful coexistence among peoples is conditioned upon mutual respect and reciprocal understanding. In the absence of a genuine dialogue among nations and civilizations, ignorance will be perpetuated, which means that the human family will continue to be threatened, or will again be its own victim. We must call into question some of our ancestral habits and deal decidedly with the problems that separate us, seeking new spaces for communication and change capable of generating a new conscience for future generations.

Guatemala knows only too well the horror that any intolerance can create. Guatemalans have endured in their own flesh the horrendous suffering inflicted by the violence that raged in our country and was due merely to the fact that some of us maintained contrarian views, held divergent beliefs or belonged to distinct ethnic or social groups. Today Guatemalans are striving to know one another better, thus effacing any type of ideology or prejudice that is exclusive or discriminatory in nature.

We therefore support the adoption of measures seeking to mobilize world society so that it may be helped to prevent the future commission of any cruel, infamous or degrading act and promote dialogue and tolerance. We also support the appeal for the elaboration of outreach programs that instill the lessons of the Holocaust, in particular the establishment of a program of this type entitled "The Holocaust and the United Nations."

Pope John Paul II was well inspired when he warned that today and in the future we should not give in to ideologies justifying the possibility that human dignity be trampled upon by reason of differences in race, color, language or religion.

For the international community should remain vigilant and not delude itself into believing that the struggle to create a civilization which is truly liberal, humanistic and democratic, in which all shall live in peace and trust in a happy and prosperous justice, has come to an end.

Thank you