

**Welcome address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the occasion of the Plenary Assembly of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research.**

Although I cannot be present in person due to coinciding engagements that I could not avoid, I am happy to profit of the occasion for addressing to the participants of this Plenary Assembly a warm welcome that especially intends to strongly underline the firm support of the Italian Government for the activities of the Task Force.

The possibility to hold the Chair for the current year is a great honour for Italy. We strongly believe in its role and in the precious contribution that it may offer for asserting a culture of tolerance, understanding and reciprocal respect. In pursuing the aims of the Task Force, education has acquired a central role. Therefore, as from the beginning, the action of the Italian Chair has been aimed at characterising the primary role of education.

A most telling example on this respect could be the seminar on the figure of Primo Levi that we organized in Rome in coincidence with the first Plenary Assembly under our Presidency. Another example might be the seminar on teaching the Shoah in a multicultural society that we are in the process of organizing next February in the city of Montecatini -near Florence. We thought fit to invite all the member countries to report on the concrete initiatives enacted by each country in the field of education. These might be fuel for encouraging the countries that are not yet members. In this connection I cannot but express my most strong satisfaction for having seen growing in encouraging dimensions the adherences to the Task Force.

The choice for the seat of the second Plenary Assembly under the Italian Chairmanship of the Task Force fell on Trieste for several reasons. Reasons linked to the past of this city - a past marked also by dramatic pages that cannot and must not be cancelled, as it is reminded to us by the extermination Nazi camp located in the immediate vicinity of this city - a past that deserves being remembered also for a deep-rooted traditional hospitality that made of Trieste an ideal meeting point between North and South, East and West, a hospitable melting-pot of European cultures and civilisations. Yet, Trieste is not only a city harbouring a noble past, it also a city with a promising future, a city that hosts researchers and scientists coming from every part of the world, a basin of a dynamic and innovative economy. The city of Trieste expresses by nature sentiments of optimism, openness, pacific coexistence and reciprocal respect on which the European ideal is based. It is the same ideal towards which the dream of Anne Frank was aiming and in this connection, by concluding my address and while renewing my best wish for a good work, I like to recall her words: "I firmly believe that the world will once again look at the good".

Trieste, 16.12.2004

Gianfranco Fini