**Speaking points for Ambassador Peter Sørensen**

**Opening of the exhibition "The Family Camp"**

**(27 January 2016, 12:30 PdN Salle des pas perdus)**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Seventy-one years after the end of WWII, the Holocaust still leaves its scars – scars that must forever be imbedded into our collective memory.

As a father myself I say: As time passes, we share a responsibility to remember the Holocaust – the Shoah – and to mourn all its victims. We have a duty to pass on this horrible lesson of history. That is our responsibility towards the Jewish people, it is a responsibility towards mankind, towards future generations – and for us – towards Europe itself.

Our duty is to ensure that present and future generation as are conscious of the roots of the Holocaust. Understanding evil – and how it so easily made its way into our own societies - is the first step to prevent evil from prevailing again.

This year – with the support of the Polish and Czech Permanent Missions to the UN in Geneva – we chose to tell a particular story. The story of the Terezín Ghetto and the 'Family Camp' in Birkenau. This story is emblematic of the Nazi Regime's clean-cut plan for the so-called 'Final solution'. The two places are tragically interlinked: thousands of the prisoners of the Terezín Ghetto, were transferred to the camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau, where they eventually met their end.

This exhibition – which we kindly have on loan from the Terezín Memorial Museum - tells the story of a Nazi regime that in 194 chose Terezín to become a "showcase camp" - after the international community demanded access to inspect the facility. The SS ordered camp residents to 'beautify' the ghetto; a horrible travesty was created - with the aim of persuading the international community about the benign intentions of the Nazis. History showed us that sadly, the Nazis' strategy was effective, and the international community fell for this showcase camp. And after the international inspectors left, prisoners went back to living – and dying – in Terezín.

You will see behind you an array of touching pieces of art, including poetry and drawings by the prisoners, many of whom were children, display the inhumane conditions they lived in. For me, this is a particularly touching to think of how this art filled their lives with a bit of something that allowed their minds to go somewhere the evil they were subjected to could not reach them.

I thank the Permanent Missions of Poland and of the Czech Republic for making this exhibition possible – and a warm thank to all of you for being here today.

"Join each other in not forgetting"

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