

Secretary-General's remarks to the media with President Reuven Rivlin of Israel

Jerusalem, 28 August 2017

Thank you very much, Mr. President, for your warm welcome. I started the visit to your beautiful country with two very emotional moments: first in Yad Vashem and then in the Grove of Nations; and Yad Vashem is there to remind us of the holocaust and to remind us of how important it is even today as the holocaust was not more than the culmination of millennia of expression of anti-Semitism around the world through discriminations and persecution that I witness also in my own country in the middle ages and then with the expulsion of Jews in the 16th century.

Yad Vashem is there to remind us that we need to be in the first line of fighting against anti-Semitism and also fighting against all other forms of bigotry, be it racism, xenophobia or even anti Muslim hatred, and to promote understanding and to promote dialogue. And I'm very appreciative, Mr. President, of what has been your commitment to dialogue and to understanding; and then in the Grove of Nations, symbol of understanding among the nations states that you mentioned, but also with the possibility to plant an olive tree that represents both life and peace. I was reminded that my mission is, everywhere, to promote dialogue, understanding and peace, and these are my messages in the beginning of this visit. I want to express to you, Mr. President, that you can be fully confident that in my role as Secretary-General and, in relation to the functions of the Secretariat that I am supposed to lead, I am very keen in stressing the values of the Charter and a very important value of the Charter impartiality, and impartiality means treating all states equally and I'm totally committed to that in my action and in everything I can do for the Organization I lead.

I do believe that in particular where you mentioned those that call for the destruction of the State of Israel that that is a form of modern anti-Semitism, but you also understand that I sometimes disagree with positions of the Government of Israel or any other government, and that is absolutely normal in society. We will always be very frank in the dialogue with the State of Israel in trying to find ways for peace to be possible in this region, but we will always be very committed to make sure that anti-Semitism doesn't prevail and that equality in the treatment of all states is fully respected.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

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