

**ΧΑΙΡΕΤΙΣΜΟΣ ΠΡΟΕΔΡΟΥ ΙΚΘ Κ. ΔΑΥΙΔ ΣΑΛΤΙΕΛ ΓΙΑ ΥΠΟΔΟΧΗ MICHAEL ROTH (2/11/2017, 13.30).**

Your Excellency, Minister of State, Mr. Michael Roth,

Dear Consul General, Mr. Walter Stechel

Dear Deputy Consul General, Mrs. Annita Englert

Dear Director of the office of the Minister of State, Mr. Klemens Semtner

Rabbi of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, Aharon Israel

Esteemed Guests,

The Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, in the presence of the members of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece, welcomes the delegation of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The people who are with us today, have shown time and again that they are ready to listen to what we have to say. To come to the table with a sincere sentiment to develop a partnership. Today Germany insists on supporting initiatives that not only remind to everyone the atrocities of the Holocaust but also focus especially in ways that can teach the younger generation.

In recent years Germany has provided support for projects that relate to Jewish life. The summer camp of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, the restoration of the prewar Monastiriotes Synagogue and the restoration of the Synagogue of Trikala that is scheduled to commence soon. Furthermore, yesterday – with the contribution and support of Minister Roth and President Steinmeier – a new Fund is going to be formed for the implementation of a programme that will provide essential homecare services to the very few remaining Greek holocaust survivors. This programme, an initiative of our Community that will benefit the entire Greek Jewry, will also be realized soon.

These initiatives indicate the willingness of contemporary Germany to accept responsibility for the annihilation of the 28 Jewish Communities that

existed and operated in Greece before the Holocaust, for the 96% of the Jews of Thessaloniki who were exterminated in Auschwitz-Birkenau and the almost complete destruction of all traces of Jewish presence in Thessaloniki that dated back to the foundation of the city. A loss that neither our Community, the city itself, nor Greece will be able to fully recover from.

Today the common objective to strengthen the memory of the Holocaust, to combat Antisemitism, to create the conditions that will make words “Never Again” to be meaningful for the younger generation is what bonds Germany with the State of Israel, our Community and the Greek Jewry.

I do not think that there is another German Minister that visited so frequently Greece as did Mr. Roth from the first time he came to Thessaloniki till today. And this is not the only way that he has shown his commitment, his willingness to cultivate and further a constructive dialogue with our Community and the Jews of Greece. He has done so by insisting on the need to never forget. By always underlining the need to educate the future generations on the devastating consequences of the prevalence of racism and intolerance, as in the case of Nazi Germany in the 1930s.

But the most emphatic way that Minister Roth, as a representative of the German Federal government, proved his faith in the bilateral relationship with the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, was and is, his commitment towards the development of the Holocaust Museum of Greece. And that is because when back in 2014 I presented to him the idea of an institute that will not only serve as a constant reminder of the annihilation of the Greek Jewish Communities, but will also be a center for educating the future generations; although at that time we had no land to build on, no designs as to what will be created; “he said yes, this can be done and I will be by your side to see it through”.

Today this may sound trivial, but it was the notion of support by the Federal Republic of Germany that played an incremental role in creating step by step the conditions that allow the development of the Holocaust Museum of

Greece. And it was the work of Minister Roth and of all the delegates of the German State, Ambassador Schoof, Consul General Von Voss, Consul General Stechel and of course Deputy Consul General Annita Englert that was the cornerstone of that process that brought us, where we are today.

Therefore our Community today does not welcome only a delegation of the official representatives of Germany. We welcome our friends and partners. And in appreciation of this friendship and bilateral collaboration I would like to present to Minister Roth this small token. (**παρουσιάζουμε το δίσκο και τον πάπυρο**).

Mr. Roth,

Michael,

You will always be welcome in Thessaloniki as a friend of our Community. And in spite of the end of your tenure I am certain that we will continue to cooperate and you will come back to Thessaloniki, by our side, to witness the inauguration of the Holocaust Museum of Greece.

Thank you very much,