

Speech during the presentation of the Officers' Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland to a citizen of the State of Israel, Mr Micha Lindenstrauss, Ombudsman and Comptroller of the State of Israel

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to congratulate Mr Micha Lindenstrauss most sincerely. I am delighted that Justice Lindenstrauss's exceptional achievements in the field of the defence of human rights have been appreciated and duly honoured.

I have in my grateful memory our cooperation in December last year when we jointly organised in Oświęcim a special session on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the enactment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. .

I am well aware of the fact that your commitment for this session was a difficult decision. German concentration camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau, where Germans murdered members of your family, is connected for you and for the majority of Jews with painful memories. However, with great courage and determination, you undertook the challenge and accepted my proposal.

We both agreed that a meeting and talks between Ombudsmen from many countries at the site of the greatest crime in the 20th century would convey a strong and symbolic message. And that it is precisely in Auschwitz that we would be reminded why the need arose for the formulation of the human rights written into the Universal Declaration.

We still wish to build our future and care for the freedom, security and rights of every person in every place on this milestone document.

Let me emphasise that the honouring of Mr Micha Lindenstrauss, Ombudsman and Comptroller of the State of Israel by Mr Lech Kaczyński, President of the Republic of Poland, must also be seen in a broader historical perspective.

It is written into the unique, centuries-long tradition of the bonds between Poles and Jews. It is an expression of respect for our common history, for Jewish culture, which for centuries added to the splendour of our country.

At the same time, my presence in Israel is to prove that we not only have beautiful and also difficult pages in the past, but also a promising challenging future.

Today I would like today to thank personally Mr Lindenstrauss for all the things that we have accomplished together.

I express the hope that we will be able to continue our contacts for the benefit of Polish and Israeli citizens and also for those societies which expect our support on their road to freedom and democracy.

That is why we need international solidarity and close cooperation between the Ombudsmen of Poland and Israel. Working in agreement, we can with greater effectiveness stand up against all manifestations of racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism.

Your Honour, please accept my congratulations! I wish you every success in your further activities. Please remember that in the war against evil and injustice you can always count on the friendship and support of the Polish side.

I would also like to thank the Ambassador and all of you, ladies and gentlemen, for the splendid organisation of this ceremony.