**The Address of Radek Banga**

**On the Occasion of The Day of Commemoration in Memory of Victims of the Holocaust**

**And Prevention of Crimes Against Humanity**

**Senate of the Czech Parliament**

**January 27, 2017**

Ladies and gentlemen,

My name is Radek Banga. I am a Roma musician. My grandfather, Ernest Haluška, and his three brothers were members of resistance movement during WWII. Ernest and two other brothers were partisans; the third brother was in the army. My grandpa was the only one who survived the war. The concentration camp changed all his life; it changed the life of all our family. When listening to the eyewitnesses portraying all of the atrocities of WWII, moreover, when members of your family experienced the WWII themselves, it makes you very critical to all of the manifestations of hatred and xenophobia in nowadays society.

I was lucky to have been accepted by the family of my wife, Veronika, even though I am of a different ethnic background, I am Roma. None of the family members ever addressed my ethnicity. They have always been interested in me as a person. The reason for that could be that the grandfather of this Czech family, the member of Sokol Organization, had stayed all throughout WWII in German prisons and Terezín concentration camp. He had always promoted to his descendants that the nations did not matter as much as people themselves. He met very courageous Czechs as well as Czechs who betrayed their citizens. Out of fear they sent their friends into the arms of death. He told stories about atrocious Germans as well as about Germans who helped the prisoners while putting their own lives at stake.

And so I have the need to contemplate the existence and attitude of some people, who, in the twenty-first century, still hate others for colour of their skin, for their ethnicity or sexual orientation. Had the world not learned from WWII suffering? Does anyone think that all of the atrocities the WWII brought had not been atrocious enough to make us remember them once for all? Had there not been enough victims of WWII? There were so many families affected by that war. One could visit any Czech village and would always encounter memorials and, in some villages, even the eyewitnesses of WWII.

The Holocaust was frightening consequence of the spread of hatred towards others. These days, I hear so many people say they would never opt for multicultural world. Unfortunately, many politicians and various movements spreading the hatred and ideologies have been on the rise. Their idea of the world is to create a world of the people of same race and ethnicity and surround it by barbed wire or brick wall. Have these people been fully aware of their ideologies? Let us think about the world of nowadays. Vast majority of all global technological products, including the mobile phones, comes from Asia. Had it not been for Asian people, we would not have anything to wear. What about Italian pizza? How about American fast food restaurants? People claim they would never dare to visit these, though the restaurants of this kind have always been full. How about Brazilian or Turkish coffee? What about German cars with Japanese engines? Had it not been for Swedes, vast majority of Czech people would not have affordable furniture and our fighter pilots would not have jets to fly. We crave Mexican food, Cuban rum, and Dutch yoghurts and keep all this food in fridges made in Slovenia. The microphone I have been talking to most likely was not made in the Czech Republic. Everyone surely knows the songs of Elvis Presley, Native American. Everyone has been touched by Arabic stories of One Thousand and One Nights. We all laugh watching the films staring Charlie Chaplin, the Roma actor. Nobody has ever doubted one of the most fundamental scientists of Jewish origin, Albert Einstein.

All of the aforementioned are product of multicultural society; that means the product of our diversity, not uniformity. Do we really want to lose all this?

I am strongly convinced that we, the people of the twenty-first century, can achieve more than just hatred. This world has never been black and white only. The thing, that has been making our world richer place to live, is diversity, mutual tolerance and search for the good; search for things that we could all benefit from. This is the only meaningful way to avoid future wars. We all know, from history, where we could get when we opt for intolerance, fundamentalism or nationalism. The hatred cannot be controlled and it cannot be satisfied. We saw that repeatedly happening in the past. Therefore it is fundamental not to forget the history, so that we do not have to go through all those events again.