Your Excellences,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends,

I am extremely honored to be here, in the highest legislative institution of the European Union, at this official event hosted by the Prime Minister of Romania.

The topic is quite large and, as mentioned, our voices can contribute to the further development of policies dedicated to combating anti-Semitism at European and national level, and to the transition from policies to action.

I am here as President of "Dr. Moses Rosen" B'nai B'rith Forum of Romania.

Let me mention that B'nai B'rith is an international organization accredited as an NGO at the UN, present at UNESCO and at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. It brings together Jews of all origins, who serve the communities they live in, under the B'nai B'rith motto: charity, brotherly love, harmony.

In Romania, B'nai B'rith has a history of 145 years. It was the first Jewish civic organization founded in Bucharest, in 1873, at the initiative of Jewish intellectuals of that time and of the American Consul Benjamin Peixoto, only 30 years after the B'nai B'rith Order was founded in New York, in October 1843.

B'nai B'rith Romania had a winding journey. The organization was abolished twice, once by the Antonescu dictatorship and then again by the Communist dictatorship.

The current organization of our Forum strives to continue on the path of the forerunners, to adapt to today's conditions in Romania and in the world, with the support of the Romanian Federation of Jewish Communities, of B'nai B'rith Europe and of B'nai B'rith International.

With a growing number of members and with the support group made of non-Jews, personalities of Romania's science, culture and economy, B'nai B'rith Romania gained national and international experience in the
development of several projects.

Ladies and gentlemen,
Let me stop at the most important multinational project in Central and Eastern Europe, initiated by B'nai B'rith Europe for seven countries, in 2013, the Year of the European Citizen. The "Bridges of Tolerance" project focused on enhancing European collaboration to help combat prejudice, discrimination, racism and anti-Semitism, as well as to support mutual understanding and respect.
In Romania, the "Bridges of Tolerance" project aimed to create an educational platform for the presentation of the contribution of the Jews to the different walks of the cultural life, as well as their collaboration with the majority. Moreover, after the first edition, which was dedicated to the "Contribution of Jewish Ethnicities to the Development of Romania", we edited a volume on this issue, at the initiative of the President of FEDROM (the Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania) and of our representative in the Romanian Parliament. It comprised 47 scientific works, more than 2/3 of which were written by non-Jews - a proof of appreciation enjoyed in the past and present by the Jews of Romania. The second edition focused on: "The Importance of Education; Keeping the memory of the Holocaust; The image of the Jews in Romanian society and their contribution to the field of diplomacy". There were interactive sessions and, I believe, the most important part was the series of encounters of high school students with Holocaust survivors.
The 3rd edition of our project included something new: alongside Jews, the audience learned about the Roma and Tatar minorities. In time, these minorities went through difficulties and it was hard for them to survive. The topics also included new areas: "Dimensions of coexistence and contributions to the development of Romania". I can say it was a natural move. This happened in 2015, 20 years after the adoption of the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, on 1 February 1995. Romania was the first Council of Europe member to ratify this document. Therefore, we intended, on the one hand, to promote, at national level, the contribution of the Jewish community to the development of Romania and, on the other hand, at the European level, to disseminate
among the European citizens, the Romanian model of tolerance, mutual respect, inter-culturalism and culture of dialogue.

The 4th edition proved that the "Bridges of Tolerance" is a successful project, appreciated nationally and internationally. Please note that, every year, we had guests from abroad. We established that the main objective of the project was to bring closer and together, in time, national minorities and the majority of the country. Given the interest expressed by everybody in the previous year, we chose a larger topic: "National minorities in Romania - A century of cohabitation", followed by "The Contribution of Romanian minorities to the development and vitality of European culture", at last year's edition. By promoting a culture of tolerance and by giving importance to ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity, we can build, through education, a future in which anti-Semitic manifestations will be limited. Unfortunately, these intensified in Europe, in recent years. It's not just about tolerance, but about much more. It is about recognizing the values created by any individual or social group, regardless of the ethnic group they belong to. It is about how to use the democratic values we have had for over 25 years. It is about creating a bridge due to development through culture and education.

We believe that, by this project, B'nai B'rith Romania was able to initiate a dialogue with government representatives, with other NGOs, with Jews and non-Jews who share the same goals.

Throughout its activity, B'nai B'rith Romania received the support of the Romanian Parliament, the Romanian Government, the Romanian Presidency (two editions took place under the high patronage of the President of Romania), the Romanian Academy, non-governmental organizations and civil society, to whom we are very grateful.

Thank you for your attention!