

TASK FORCE FOR
INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION ON
HOLOCAUST
EDUCATION, REMEMBRANCE,
AND RESEARCH

Norwegian
Chairmanship
2009

After extensive consultations, the ITF Chair has authorized the ITF's Permanent Office to transmit the following statement:

In recent weeks, certain individuals and institutions have publically questioned Norway's suitability to chair the "Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF)". The reason for this is Norway's commemoration this year of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Nobel Prize winner Knut Hamsun.

The commemoration of Knut Hamsun's birth has led to a debate about him as an acclaimed author and as a person who sympathized with the Nazi regime before and during the Second World War. The debate is understandable and welcome, but it does not in any way affect Norway's current Chairmanship of the Task Force. Norway is firm in its commitment to the principles of the Stockholm Declaration, which form the basis of the Task Force, and is dedicated to the fight against contemporary anti-Semitism and all forms of intolerance.

It is Hamsun's literary work that is being honored. His pro-Nazi activities must continue to be condemned as they were when he was tried in Norway, convicted and punished after the war. Because of this sordid aspect of his life, Hamsun will remain a controversial figure in Norway and globally.

Task Force members have expressed not only full confidence in the Norwegian Chair, but also appreciation for the unwavering commitment of the Norwegian Chair to further the goals of the Task Force in the international public arena in the areas of Holocaust education, remembrance, and research and in the fight against anti-Semitism.

-- Ambassador Tom Vraalsen, Chair of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research