Message by Mr Frans Timmermans, First Vice President of the European Commission at the occasion of Rosh Hashanah 2015

This past year has been once again a difficult one for the Jewish Community. As in previous years, we have seen worrying trends: an increase in hate speech and hate crime against the Jewish community and a rise in antisemitic incidents and attacks in several EU countries, culminating in terrorist attacks in Paris and Copenhagen. The European Commission and I personally take these concerns very seriously. The European Agenda for Security is our response to such attacks, which are also attacks to our core European values.

We will not tolerate any kind of hate speech, hate crime incident, discrimination or harassment against individuals or communities, particularly where they are committed on grounds of the religion or ethnicity of individuals or groups. These incidents pose severe challenges for public actors, community leaders and civil society at large. We must stand together and join our efforts when working against any form of violence, racism and discrimination. I am deeply convinced that fighting antisemitism is a responsibility for society at large.

Early in October, the Commission will be hosting its first annual EU Colloquium on Fundamental rights, bringing together government and civil society figures. Together with the Commissioner for Justice, Vera Jourová, I have decided to dedicate this first edition to preventing and combating antisemitic and anti-Muslim hatred in Europe. I want the discussions to focus on concrete aspects: how to improve law enforcement, train public bodies, fight hate speech online with IT companies, raise awareness in education and media and explore funding needs for projects fostering an inclusive society.

The Commission and I personally stay committed to continue building a culture of inclusive tolerance and respect in the European Union.

Wishing you and the Jewish community as a whole a year of life, health, prosperity and peace!

Shanah Tovah! Happy New Year!