



Documentation of the Symposium “The Washington Agreement and the General Settlement Fund” on 14 November 2022

23 Mar 2023

On 14 November 2022, the international symposium on the subject “The Washington Agreement and the General Settlement Fund for Victims of National Socialism” took place at Vienna’s Diplomatic Academy.

It was held to mark two key events:

Firstly, The 20th anniversary of the conclusion of the Washington Agreement on the Settlement of Questions of Compensation and Restitution for Victims of National Socialism and the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the General Settlement Fund for Victims of National Socialism were both celebrated in 2021.

Secondly, Having completed its tasks the General Settlement Fund was formally dissolved by resolution of the Board of Trustees in April 2022, thereby concluding one of the most large-scale projects for compensation and restitution for Nazi victims ever to be implemented in Austria.

This was an occasion to take stock, to shed light on the status quo of the agreed measures and to provide an outlook on future challenges.

Speakers included the Agreement’s negotiators, political leaders, those responsible for implementing the compensation and restitution measures, and scholars who have researched and published on the topic.

Welcome and keynotes

Words of welcome were spoken by the Vice Director of the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna **Martina Schubert**, President of the National Council and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Fund of the Republic of Austria **Wolfgang Sobotka**, and former Federal Chancellor **Wolfgang Schüssel**.

Keynotes were given by **Stuart Eizenstat**, former US Deputy Secretary of the Treasury and leader of the negotiations that led to the Washington Agreement in 2001, and **Oliver Rathkolb**, Univ. Professor at the Institute of Contemporary History at the University of Vienna.

Panel 1: Negotiations on the Washington Agreement

This panel focused on the negotiations that led to the Washington Agreement and the implementation of the individual measures. Which measures were implemented and how, and what is the current status of the implementation? What has worked, what is outstanding?

The discussants on this panel were **Hans Winkler** (former Head of the International Law Office, Austrian negotiating team), **Herbert Pichler** (former General Counsel of the Austrian Banks and Insurance Companies, Austrian negotiating team), **Michael Haider** (Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs) representing **Ursula Kriebaum** (Professor of International Law, Austrian negotiating team), Chair: **Lilly Sucharipa** (expert on international law).

Panel 2: Implementation of the Washington Agreement

This panel focused on the implementation of the individual measures agreed in the Washington Agreement. Which measures have been implemented and how, and what is the current status of their implementation? What has worked, what is still to be done?

Participants in the panel were **Brigitte Bailer** (former Deputy Chair of the Historical Commission), **Ariel Muzicant** (President of the European Jewish Congress, former President of the Jewish Community Vienna), **Hannah Lessing** (Secretary General of the National Fund and General Settlement Fund), **Pia Schölnberger** (Head of the Commission for Provenance Research at the Federal Ministry of Art, Culture, Civil Service and Sport), Chair: **Helmut Wohnout** (Director General of the Austrian State Archives).

Panel 3: The General Settlement Fund – Outcomes and Impact

This panel focused on the compensation of assets by the Claims Committee and *in rem* restitution by the Arbitration Panel. How were the legal measures implemented, what challenges had to be overcome, what has been achieved by the General Settlement Fund after 20 years?

These questions were discussed by **Daniel Kalbeck** (applicant, Austria), **Erich Kussbach** (former member of the Arbitration Panel for *In Rem* Restitution), **Sir Franklin Berman** (former Chair of the Claims Committee), **Nicole Immler** (Univ. Prof., University of Humanistic Studies, Utrecht), Chair: **Fiorentina Azizi-Hacker** (human rights expert).

Concluding discussion

The concluding discussion offered the opportunity to go into more depth and to look to the future, as well as providing a chance for discussion with the audience.

Stuart Eizenstat (former Deputy Secretary of the Treasury, connected via video), **Sir Franklin Berman** (Chairman of the Claims Committee 2001-2017), **Peter Moser** (former Austrian Ambassador to the USA), **Michael Fink** (consultant Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP), **Hannah Lessing** (Secretary General of the National Fund and the General Settlement Fund), moderated by **Michael Haider** (Foreign Ministry).

Exhibition and publications

As part of the symposium, the bilingual exhibition “From Repression to Remembrance” was displayed with interesting facts about compensation and restitution for Nazi victims through the General Settlement Fund and about the tasks and activities of the National Fund.

In addition, thematic literature including the Final Report of the Claims Committee and the book series Decisions of the Arbitration Panel for *In Rem* Restitution, were available for perusal at a book table.

Picture gallery of the symposium



Downloads

- Invitation and programme for the symposium on 14 November 2022 (1.9 MiB)
- Short biographies of the speakers at the symposium "Washington Agreement and General Settlement Fund" on 14 November 2022 (292.5 KiB)
- Brochure "To comprehensively resolve open questions of compensation for victims of National Socialism ...". (2.3 MiB)