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Academic Advisory Board formed for the Redesign of the Austrian Memorial Site at Auschwitz-Birkenau

Press Release of the National Fund

25 Nov 2009

The Academic Advisory Board convened in the Austrian Parliament yesterday. The Board is to assist in the redesign of the so called Austrian pavilion in the former concentration camp and present museum Auschwitz-Birkenau. The ten member committee is composed of experts from relevant fields of expertise such as Holocaust research, memorial site education and the culture of remembrance. The members appointed honorary professor Dr. Wolfgang Neugebauer, the former director of the Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance, as their chairman.

For a long time now, visitors, academics and victims' organizations have been calling for the renewal of the outdated Austrian permanent exhibition in block 17 of the former concentration and extermination camp in line with the notions of an appropriate and up-to-date culture of remembrance. The redesign has now commenced, in implementation of a resolution of the Ministerial Council in this regard.

The redesign is being financed by the Ministry of Science, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry for European and International Affairs, as well as the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism and the Future Fund of the Republic of Austria.

In addition to the Academic Advisory Board, in January 2010, a Societal Advisory Board composed of representatives from victims' organizations, religious communities and all parliamentary factions will convene. This Board will put forward the interests and concerns of the victims and is intended to ensure that Austria deals responsibly with its past.

The National Fund, which has been entrusted with the coordination of the project as a whole, was able to obtain the services of Univ-Doz. HR Brigitte Bailer-Galanda, director of the Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance, Dr. Heidemarie Uhl of the Institute for Culture Studies at the Academy of Sciences and Univ.-Doz. Dr. Bertrand Perz of the Institute of Contemporary History at the University of Vienna for the development of a rough concept for the new exhibition. The concept, which contains the main subject areas to be covered by the new exhibition is now complete and will be examined by the two advisory boards. It will be presented to the public in early 2010.

"The development of the refined concept and the concrete work which is to be undertaken in the Austrian pavilion must then be carried out in a bilateral process in coordination with the State Museum in Auschwitz", says Mag. Hannah Lessing, Secretary General of the National Fund. "The redesign of the pavilion agreed in the government program is thus beginning to take shape, ensuring that Austria deals with the victims of National Socialism critically and responsibly."