Remarks by Ambassador Lee Feinstein at the Luncheon in Honor of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum

July 12, 2010

Thank you for coming to Poland. I know this is a difficult visit, but it is important that you are here.

Your visit reinforces the long-standing U.S. commitment to ensure that the memory of atrocities committed during the Holocaust lives on.

Poles, like Jews, Roma, and many other Eastern Europeans, suffered under Nazi occupation.

History has made Poland the custodian of countless horrific sites of memory. Some, like Auschwitz, Treblinka, Sobibor, and Belzec are well known. Hundreds of other mass graves unfortunately are lost forever.

Since the fall of Communism, successive Polish governments have embraced their responsibility to preserve these sites.

In his video remarks at the 65th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, President Obama thanked the late President Kaczynski, Prime Minister Tusk, and the people of Poland for their work to preserve Auschwitz and other places of great pain for the Polish people.

Professor Bartoszewski, our honored guest today, would be the first to tell you that camps and mass graves need to be preserved because they are places of remembrance and learning for the world.

These sites serve as a reminder that we have an obligation to confront bigotry and hatred so that such horrific acts are never again repeated.

These sites also inspire us to follow the example of brave individuals, like Professor Bartoszewski, who had the courage to confront bigotry and barbarity despite grave risk to themselves and their families.

We deeply appreciate and admire Poland's commitment, and will continue to support their efforts. As you know, two weeks ago in Krakow, Secretary Clinton announced our intent to donate $15 million to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation.

This is the most recent and most visible example of U.S. support for preservation of Holocaust sites in Poland. Few people, however, truly appreciate the extent of bilateral cooperation on these issues.

For almost twenty years, experts from the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum have worked closely with their counterparts in museums at Auschwitz, Belzec, and others, exchanging best practices on protecting

documents, developing exhibits and curricula, and preserving historical sites and materials.

Museum researchers work in Polish archives, gathering microfilm and now digital copies of documents for the Museum's archives in Washington.

Our cooperation is so strong, that Sara Bloomfield, Executive Director of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, was honored in January by the late President Kaczynski for her tremendous work to ensure that the lessons of the Holocaust live on.

Americans know that Poland is one of our closest friends and Allies. We work together around the world to champion the causes of human rights, democracy, and freedom. Our work together to preserve the memory of the Holocaust shows the true depth and breadth of our cooperation.