

**Working Session 9: (specifically selected topic) Tolerance and non-discrimination**

*Rapporteur: Mr. Tarash Papaskua, Counsellor, Permanent Representation of Georgia to the OSCE*

**No. of Statements: 29**

**Delegations: 7**

**Civil Society: 22**

**OSCE Institutions:-**

**International Organizations:-**

**Media:-**

**Rights of Reply: 6.**

The session aimed at discussing ways of how to best counter cultural prejudices and promote tolerance and non-discrimination. The role of effective education in schools, the need for educating young population, students as well as the teachers, the role of the media and governments were examined with a view to promoting appreciation for cultural and religious diversity.

Ms. Sarah Soyei, the first introducer, an executive director of EqualiTeach, a UK-based non-for-profit equality and diversity training and consultancy organization, spoke about rising intolerance towards Muslims in Europe, including towards children in schools, and what needs to be done to counter it. She particularly emphasized the important role of schools, stressing that schools are uniquely placed to counter misunderstanding and stereotypes. She underlined the negative role that media plays in contributing to rising hostility. Ms. Soyei reviewed the relevant UK legislation and national efforts with respect to the role of schools in fostering relations and promoting community cohesion. Among the barriers that exist she identified lack of time and possibilities for young people to discuss issues related to tolerance, lack of confidence on the part of teachers and lack of awareness amongst the wider public about the topic. Ms. Soyei also highlighted the importance of effective social justice education that is based on human rights and called for more engagement with local communities and ensuring inclusive approaches within schools, all of which represent elements of good practice in actively challenging prejudice.

Mr. Mark Weitzman, second introducer, from the Simon Wiesenthal Center in New York talked about the importance of remembering Holocaust and its victims, and to that end, stressed the significance of the January 27, the date commemorating Holocaust. He noted that today there is a paradox: while on the global scale there is a wider commitment to the commemoration and common values, these same values are under threat due to increase of extreme nationalism, Holocaust distortion and denial, all serving the purpose of evading responsibility. Mr. Weitzman spoke of few countries with negative developments, where governments' proposed actions, such as including anti-Semitic writers in teaching curricula, minimizing the number of victims of holocaust, etc. are aimed at erasing history and replacing them with myths. He stressed the important role the OSCE and International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) play in reminding the international community what anti-Semitism can lead to. He also underlined the importance of ODIHR's project *Words into Action* which aims at assisting the participating States through producing policy guidelines on education. He encouraged the participating States

to join the initiative and contact ODIHR. Mr. Weisman also thanked the Romanian chair of IHRA for the efforts to adopt the common definition of anti-Semitism.

Many of the interventions focused on the importance of education and ensuring that youth have access to education and opportunities for success. The role that youth play in promoting social progress was also widely acknowledged. Many of the speakers underlined the specific cases in different OSCE participating states where there is a lack of opportunities for education for national minorities and where the government proposed amendments to the laws on religious organizations are of discriminatory nature and have the potential to restrict their activities.

A number of participating States talked about their respective legislation and initiatives taken to combat hate crimes, racism, xenophobia and discrimination, as well as to promote inter cultural exchange. In light of increased number of cases of intolerance and discrimination, the need for respect for different cultures and religions and refraining from imposition of one's views was called for. The reference was also made to the use of term *tolerance* as having a negative connotation for minorities and was suggested to replace it with the term *inclusiveness*.

**Recommendations** made by participants during this session include (non-exhaustive list):

**Recommendations to the OSCE participating States:**

- Work together with ODIHR to prevent and combat all forms of intolerance and discrimination;
- Contact ODIHR and join ODIHR's Words into Action project;
- Work together with civil society towards inclusive societies by promoting diversity, dialogue and tolerance;
- Promote education among students, teachers, as well governments officials and awareness-raising to prevent intolerance and discrimination among police and prosecutors;
- Allow access to Crimea for the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine.

**Recommendations to the OSCE executive structures:**

- For ODIHR to support regional, sub-regional and national initiatives on monitoring and protecting human rights, including the issues of tolerance and non-discrimination;
- For ODIHR to assist participating States in developing guidelines for educators on tolerance and non-discrimination;
- For ODIHR to assist participating States in developing guidelines for intolerance against Christians;
- For the OSCE to include the discrimination against people of African descent into the mainstream discussion on racism and xenophobia;
- For ODIHR to facilitate dialogue within countries to improve situation with regard to the right of religious freedom;
- For the OSCE to raise awareness on remembrance of genocide. For ODIHR to assist participating States in implementing the Ljubljana Ministerial Council decision on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination;

- For the OSCE to detect how countries approach history to make the story of an ethnic minority a separate subject;
- For the OSCE to promote better education of police towards people changing religious faith, include crimes motivated by hostility to apostates into definition of hate crimes, robustly reject calls for blasphemy law, promote concept of equality before the law.