

PC.DEL/674/03
20 June 2003

ENGLISH
Original: GERMAN

Permanent Mission of Austria to the OSCE

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CONFERENCE ON ANTI-SEMITISM**

Vienna, 19-20 June 2003

**Session 4: Information and Awareness-Raising: The Role of the Media
in Conveying and Countering Prejudice**

Freedom of expression, freedom of the media and freedom of information constitute important legal rights deserving protection. Their exercise can, however, come into conflict with other legal interests.

The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms takes this into account in that, while guaranteeing these freedoms, it leaves open the possibility of intervention to limit their exercise, making reference to the related duties and responsibilities.

The Austrian legislature made use of this qualification in 1992 when they made public denial or belittlement of the Nazi genocide and other crimes against humanity punishable by imprisonment. This penal provision has constitutional status and can only be amended or repealed by Parliament with a two-thirds majority.

With regard to the "anonymity" of anti-Semitic campaigning on the Internet, I am of the opinion that we will be able to combat this problem effectively only on the basis of an international treaty, in other words an obligation under international law.

There are certainly some things in Austria that can be criticized from the point of view of this conference. I would, however, ask you to see the positive aspects too.

A few years ago, both chambers of the Austrian Federal Parliament decided, with all parliamentary groups voting in favour, to hold a memorial day each year commemorating the victims of fascism and taking a stand against violence and racism.

The Austrian Ministry of Education is endeavouring to counter anti-Semitism through various means: by providing teachers with suitable material, by specific courses, by Holocaust memorial exercises and by discussions with contemporary witnesses.

Yesterday we were reminded that Vienna is the city of Sigmund Freud. Quite in keeping with Freud, I regard anti-Semitism as a projection of one's own aggressions and of human evil onto a minority.