

**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting - Warsaw 26 September 2016****Working Session No. 11 – Tolerance and Non-Discrimination: Hate Crime****Statement of The United Kingdom for electronic circulation**

We fully support the statement delivered by Slovakia on behalf of the EU and its member states and would like to make some national remarks.

The United Kingdom is committed to promoting and protecting human rights for all, without discrimination on any grounds. We firmly believe that human rights are universal and should apply equally to all people, as enshrined in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. Indeed we believe that a state's willingness to protect its minority communities is one of the best indicators of a thriving democracy; no one should suffer hostility because of their personal characteristics, whether that be race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or gender identity.

Whilst we do not believe that the UK is less tolerant than any other part of the world, it has traditionally recorded more hate crime than other participating states. We firmly believe that this is a result of the work done to improve awareness of hate crime, better training for police and prosecutors, and improved data systems. It is delivered with the support of many civil society groups who provide services to those victims who do not want to report incidents directly to the police.

It has been widely reported that the police in England and Wales noted a significant increase in recorded hate crime during the summer of 2016. The police and partners carry out extensive monitoring of community tensions and, during June this year, the police assessed that tensions and fear of crime had risen. This was influenced by many factors, including the fear brought around by terrorist activity, such as the terrible homophobic terrorist attack in Orlando and the equally deplorable attacks in Nice and Istanbul, amongst many other terrorist attacks. These elicited unacceptable retribution attacks on innocent Muslim victims. Additionally, some of the increase was brought about by divisions that appeared in communities around the June Referendum on the UK's membership of

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the EU. It shows the importance of working to reduce community tensions at times of political uncertainty.

Thankfully, the police have recorded a drop in the level of reported hate crime back to levels experienced last year. But our Government has made clear that no hate crimes are acceptable, which is why, in July this year, we published 'Action against Hate: the UK government's plan for tackling hate crime'<sup>1</sup> This contains a range of commitments that will further tackle hate crime, including its root causes. It can be access via the UK Government Website.

Finally, our recommendation: you cannot deal with one aspect in isolation. We call on participating states to work with ODIHR to: improve hate crime recording; by creating a climate where victims feel able to report it.

Civil Society have an essential role to play but victims also need to believe that the police and judicial system are working with them to ensure perpetrators feel the full force of the law and that victims get the support they deserve.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hate-crime-action-plan-2016>