

**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2016****Statement by the Republic of Bulgaria****Working Session 11: Tolerance and non-discrimination I (continued), including prevention and responses to hate crimes in the OSCE area and combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination, also focusing on intolerance on religious grounds**

**Madame Moderator,**

The Bulgarian delegation fully supports the statement made by France on behalf of the European Union and we would like to make some further comments in our national capacity.

The Bulgarian delegation welcomes the opportunity to review the implementation of OSCE commitments related to the prevention of discrimination and hate crimes by examining challenges, good practices and lessons learned in this area.

Bulgaria is pursuing a consistent policy aimed at preventing and eliminating any forms of discrimination and promoting mutual understanding and tolerance among persons belonging to different ethnic, religious or linguistic groups.

The Constitution of the Bulgaria prohibits racial discrimination in the most categorical manner. This constitutional principle has been embodied in all branches of the domestic legislation.

At present, Bulgaria has a comprehensive and solid legal framework for combating all cases of hate crime, racism, intolerance and xenophobia. Bulgaria is also a party to the core UN and CoE human rights instruments, which are part of our domestic legal order.

Taking into account the negative trends around the world, the Bulgarian government believes that continuing efforts should be made aiming at forming positive attitudes towards citizens belonging to any ethnic group, and of addressing any prejudices in this regard. In this context, important measures have been taken to encourage the promotion of tolerance and cultural pluralism in our society.

The Bulgarian authorities consistently combat stereotypes and prejudices, if and when such are manifested against persons belonging to any ethnic, religious or linguistic minority group.

The Bulgarian authorities also closely monitor all alleged manifestations of racism and intolerance against any person on the territory of the State, and, where necessary, resolutely take steps to punish such acts.

In the context of the present meeting it should be emphasized that in Bulgaria such acts or manifestations are relatively rare.

However, Bulgarian authorities will remain vigilant and will continue to implement all necessary measures to prevent and/or sanction any such acts.