



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORT BY THE PERSONAL
REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CIO ON TOLERANCE AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Delivered by Minister Counsellor Knut-Are Sprauten at the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 7 December 2023

Mr. Chair,

Like others, we wish to thank the Personal Representatives Rabbi Andrew Baker and Dr. Regina Polak for their reports and welcome them back to the Permanent Council.

As the Personal Representatives have highlighted, we are horrified by the significant rise in antisemitic incidents across the OSCE region. These incidents, triggered by the Israel-Hamas conflict, have led to violent acts against Jewish communities, schools, and synagogues, causing increased insecurity and fear among Jewish people.

At the same time, we must insist that this is not a conflict between religions. The three major world religions - Judaism, Christianity, Islam - share much. Abraham is our common ancestor, and our holiest places are in the Middle East. While religion is often used as justification for the right to land, there are courageous spokespersons for the religions who work for peace and coexistence. They have Norway's full support.

Mr. Chair,

When someone thinks others are less valuable because of their skin colour, their name, their beliefs, their sexual orientation, or where they come from, it weakens the community. When racism and discrimination prevail, living conditions worsen, job opportunities diminish, health deteriorates, and educational outcomes suffer. Intolerance weakens democracy by silencing voices and limiting perspectives.

Much is done to combat and prevent prejudice and discrimination in the OSCE region. Organizations and activists fight against racism every day. Legal protection is developed in most countries around this table. We gain knowledge through research and experience. But as the personal representatives have pointed out – it's not enough.

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The severity and negative consequences of intolerance and bias require our continuous attention. We must intensify our efforts.

The Norwegian government has recently released a National Action Plan against racism and discrimination for the period of 2024 to 2027. The National Action Plan particularly focuses on the experiences faced by youth as well as emphasizing measures in the workplace and in local societies and municipalities.

Mr. Chair,

We greatly value the support provided by ODIHR and the three Personal Representatives. Their visit to Norway in September was particularly beneficial. They engaged with key actors from both government and civil society, deeply enriching our perspectives and approaches in combating intolerance and discrimination. Their interactions have not only strengthened our National Action Plan but also inspired a broader, more inclusive dialogue on tolerance and non-discrimination practices. This collaboration underscores the importance of international partnership in addressing these global challenges.

I thank you.