

**STATEMENT BY THE AUSTRIAN DELEGATION AT THE OSCE
CONFERENCE ON TOLERANCE AND THE FIGHT AGAINST
RACISM, XENOPHOBIA AND DISCRIMINATION**

Brussels, 13 and 14 September 2004

Mr. Chairman,

Austria supports and endorses the efforts within the OSCE to combat all forms of racism, xenophobia and discrimination, and to promote tolerance, respect and mutual understanding.

For some time now, those legislative measures that are essential for combating racism and xenophobia and that are designed to give effect, on the one hand, to the European Union (EU) directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin and, on the other hand, to the EU directive on establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and education have been finalized at the federal level.

In this connection, owing to its federal structure, Austria was confronted with an especially complex legal situation involving the question of competence. Since then, either most Austrian Federal States (*Bundesländer*) have passed the laws required for their area of responsibility or these laws are at an advanced drafting stage. In this way, Austria will soon have at its disposal a comprehensive and modern legal framework, which will make non-discrimination a reality in broad areas of life.

Having already conducted an assessment of the current situation, Austria will now begin to draw up structural guidelines for a national programme of action in the wake of the United Nations World Conference in Durban against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. These guidelines should take into account, in particular, the conclusions and recommendations drawn from the previously conducted monitoring and report processes. We should especially like to include in this action programme the conclusions reached as a result of the series of OSCE conferences on the subject of tolerance and the combating of racism, xenophobia, discrimination and anti-Semitism.

Mr. Chairman,

In the meantime, at the inter-State level, Austria has become part of a closely knit network of monitoring mechanisms concerned with this complex of issues. Just this year, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance has visited Austria and a draft version of the Commission's report has already been made available to the Austrian authorities. This report contains a series of recommendations on how protection against racism and intolerance

in Austria should be further strengthened. The responsible agencies in Austria are currently studying these proposals in detail and are looking for ways and means of implementing the recommendations in the most effective possible way.

Austria has only recently received an extensive questionnaire on this complex of issues for use by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, an agency of the European Union. Austria's response to this questionnaire is in the final stages.

The work for the combined 15th and 16th National Reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination — the monitoring mechanism of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination — is at a well advanced stage. Austria is aware that the deadline for the submission of this report has already elapsed, and so is continuing to work on it with great urgency.

For this reason, we are very interested in receiving further concrete and practical information on these matters and are therefore following the progress of this conference with the greatest interest.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.