



**PERMANENT MISSION
OF TURKEY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR YUSUF BULUÇ
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ON
CORDOBA CHAIRMANSHIP CONFERENCE ON COMBATING INTOLERANCE
AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MUSLIMS**

(Permanent Council, 25 October 2007)

I requested the floor essentially to make a few remarks and observations about the fact and the conduct of the latest Cordoba Conference in order to secure for it a certain recognition at the Council level thus save it from being relegated to absolute informality. The customary Spanish hospitality and generosity extended recently in Cordoba to the participants of the OSCE Chairmanship Conference on Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims moves us to restate once again and at the Permanent Council our thanks first and foremost to Ambassador de Boado and the whole Chairmanship team.

The second Cordoba Conference, intentionally less holistic than the first one, aimed to focus on an issue which has been a matter of growing concern for the OSCE community, of alarming proportions for some, that is the intolerance and discrimination against Muslims. We are as satisfied as the hosts are that the Conference has achieved its aim principally to raise the level of political awareness on the issue. It also offered, thanks to its broad agenda, a platform for an in-depth discussion on the ways and means of tackling this specific form of intolerance in all its dimensions. The contributions of many prominent experts and civil society representatives, both from Muslim and non-Muslim communities, as well as the interventions of the representatives of the International Organizations and participating States have deepened and enriched our understanding of the phenomenon and engendered an impressive compilation of recommendations and good practices. They should inspire us to devise tools and formulate policies at the national and international level to combat intolerance and discrimination against Muslims. We see these recommendations like the ones emanating from other OSCE conferences as equally deserving follow-up at the appropriate OSCE bodies and by the relevant OSCE structures.

This conference has proven once again that the OSCE's double-track approach which utilizes both holistic and thematic perspectives to combat all forms of intolerance serves us well and should be maintained. This dual approach premised on the principle that, on the one hand, we

recognize the universality of the underlying causes of all forms of intolerance and the efforts to combat them, on the other hand, focus on the specificity and singularity of each form of intolerance in terms of their cultural and historical uniqueness.

Our assessment of the Cordoba Conference would be incomplete if I have not mentioned some of its features which we thought required improvement. We are cognizant of the fact that the "OSCE Chairman-in-Office Cordoba Declaration" summarizing the proceedings of the Conference reflects the perception of the Chairmanship and does not seek to express a consensus view. However, these declarations do carry a certain weight as references to guide our future work, and as such, should best be based on consultations and the existing OSCE *acquis* and vocabulary. The leadership role of the Chairmanship may be seen to include the taking of certain initiatives. Without seeking to deny the CiO such a license we would advise that prior consultations is in the common interest and contributes to the success of such initiatives.

Let me also say a word on the Civil Society Preparatory Meeting which took place in the city of Jaen preceding the Conference. Civil Society Preparatory Meetings have become an established practice which complements the human dimension meetings. The objective of these meetings, as we understand, is to provide an opportunity for the NGOs to discuss among themselves and draw out their list of recommendations as an input for the main meeting in which they also take part. For these meetings to be more effective in the future, we recommend first from a logistic point of view that they are organized in the same venue as the main meeting and substantively that the list of recommendations to be transmitted to the main meeting should be excluded to the views of the NGOs only. Government representatives, including those of the host country, should be allowed to participate, if they so wish, but only as observers. This is to avoid an overshadowing presence which might inhibit a more liberal exchange of views among NGOs. ODIHR should assume a more central role in bringing the NGOs together and providing them with information on the work of the OSCE and the objectives and the agenda of the meeting in question.

I hope that this assessment and recommendations will be found useful in the preparation and conduct of our future meetings as well as provide an input and a stimulus for a follow-up at the Human Dimension Committee which we encourage the Chairmanship to undertake.

Thank you.