

OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism
Berlin, 28 – 29 April 2004

ENGLISH only

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This meeting brings governments together with a broad range of nongovernmental organizations, both national and international, to address the scourge of antisemitism in Europe. The OSCE's foundation on the human rights principles of the Helsinki Act of 1975 provides an appropriate point of reference for working together to this end..

These principles, and the international human rights treaties in which they are grounded, provide governments and the human rights movement a common framework on which to confront antisemitism. These universal standards of non-discrimination provide a basis for the strong legal and political tools we can invoke to fight antisemitism.

In fighting antisemitism together we are fighting a form of racism and a problem of human rights. In the first OSCE conference on antisemitism, in Vienna in June 2003, Human Rights First joined others in the international human rights movement in making clear that antisemitic acts are violations of human rights—and that the rise of antisemitism in Europe required a prominent place on the human rights agenda.

We urged governments and civil society organizations alike to take concerted action—and voiced our conviction that the racist violence of antisemitism must be a concern of all people. We said that communities under racist attack should never be left to fend for themselves—that the Jewish community should not shoulder the burden itself.

As in Vienna, we are here today to demonstrate our firm commitment to working together to make the struggle against antisemitism a part of the mainstream of human rights protection. In a report prepared for this conference, *Antisemitism in Europe: Challenging Official Indifference*, we have set out the nature of the challenge, drawing upon information on the reality of antisemitism in Europe from government and nongovernmental sources, and provide an inventory of the options with which to move forward.

Antisemitism is now indeed more firmly on the international human rights agenda. There have been some measurable results—from important new legislation in Belgium and France to provide new tools in the fight against racism, to post-Vienna decisions of the OSCE to give a limited mandate to its Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to monitor and combat antisemitism and other forms of racism. There is also the fact of this meeting—its high level recognition of the severity of the challenge faced and its potential to set in motion concrete measures to combat antisemitism at the national and international level.

There is still much to be done, on the national and international level, by governments and by civil society alike. In the areas of monitoring and reporting on antisemitic acts, a fraction of the member states (and imminent members) of the European Union have

attained the standards set out by the E.U. itself. In the broad family of 55 nations in the OSCE, this picture is even more bleak, with little information compiled on the incidence of racist violence (or identifying the particular groups targeted), and official specialized agencies established to confront racism that are uneven in quality or entirely absent.

In the areas of law enforcement and criminal justice, other key elements to combat racism and racist violence, even the criminalization of racist violence has lagged, while legislation making racist motives an aggravating circumstance in prosecutions of crimes exists only in a handful of countries.

The OSCE member states have the benefit of detailed recommendations developed by international and regional bodies, such as the antiracism bodies of the European Union and the Council of Europe and the United Nation's treaty-body, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Recommendations by these bodies, made in the context of their review of states' compliance with treaty obligations, provide a partial roadmap on how to arrive at what must be done.

We encourage the representatives here to recommend measures to be undertaken by every individual member state while endorsing new mechanisms within the OSCE's own structures empowered to advance the fight against antisemitism and other forms of racism. These include for this conference to:

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- Issue a strong concluding statement making the fight against antisemitism and racism a high priority for all;
- Adopt a plan of action to be implemented in every OSCE country that will include improved monitoring and reporting and the strengthening of law enforcement mechanisms;
- Establish a high-level position within the OSCE structure, responsible for oversight of monitoring, reporting, and action on antisemitism and other forms of racism;
- Empower the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to actively seek information from each OSCE member state, make recommendations, and issue public reports on concerning antisemitism and other forms of racism.

Thank you.