



Arab Republic Of Egypt

PC.DEL/679/10
30 June 2010

ENGLISH only

Statement by:

Ambassador Nihad Zikry

Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt

For

International Cultural and Scientific Relations

At

The OSCE High – Level Conference

On

Tolerance and Non – Discrimination

Session 3

(Astana, 29 – 30 June 2010)

30 June 2010

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Ministers,
Heads of Delegations,

ENGLISH only

It is my distinct pleasure and honour to address this important high level conference on behalf of H.E Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt.

I would like to begin by expressing Egypt's sincere gratitude to the government of Kazakhstan for its warm hospitality, and wise competent manner with which the Kazakh Chairmanship is guiding the work of the OSCE this year.

We in Egypt strongly support the initiative of Kazakhstan to organize this comprehensive conference, and hope that there will be a constant follow up of the relevant OSCE conference regarding this issue, notably the Cordoba Chairmanship Conference on Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, held under the auspices of the Spanish Chairmanship in 2007.

Mr. Chairman,

Egypt holds the belief that dialogue remains the most efficient tool for preventing extremism, combating racism and xenophobia. To achieve peaceful coexistence between people with different ethnic and religious backgrounds. More attention should be given to the issue of defamation of religions.

Our position has always been to reject any depiction of religions and their symbols as legitimate exercise of their rights. We call upon all to consider this matter objectively with the hope to reach the desired balance that protects the freedom of expression of some and respects the rights and sentiments of others.

Our call for Combating the use of religion to stir up racial discrimination is loud. We consider such actions of insulting religions as a global phenomenon that requires unified international efforts to fight it in a spirit of seriousness, responsibility, fairness.

There is a need to clarify the difference between religions and the acts of their Believers.

Defamation of religions has become such a wide spread practice leading to a numerous violation of basic rights and fundamental freedoms. It is no secret that reaching common ground on this subject is a gruesome task, but we have

to strive for it. In all cases. It is imperative for all to recognize that there is a serious threat facing Muslims as result of attacks of their religion.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to stress that Egypt supports all kinds of dialogue within the context of fulfilling the pledge in the United Nations Charter to promote universal respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion, and supports all measures in the fight against discrimination, intolerance, racism and xenophobia.

We are willing to cooperate with all countries in this context to establish a peaceful and prosperous world and a just and equitable world order.

Egypt attaches the highest priority to the fight against racism. We view the Durban declaration and programme of action adopted by the world conference against racism in 2001 as a milestone in the global fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The Durban review conference of April 2009 was a reinforcement for it.

Undoubtedly, progress in a number of areas in the fight against racism, racist, xenophobic manifestations and practices are becoming more potent than ever. Nevertheless, unprecedented dangers to national, regional and global peace and stability still prevails in the world today.

Current trends suggest that the commitments undertaken by the international community have not been effectively implemented in most parts of the world. Serious challenges and manifestations have persisted, others have resurged and new dangerous developments have occurred since the terrorist attacks of September 11th.

It is of paramount importance to reinforce our collective efforts to promote dialogue in order to curtail intercultural and interfaith misgivings and misunderstandings in order to create an atmosphere of self-esteem, trust and mutual respect.

Stressing the importance of social harmony, especially acceptance of the other, search for commonalities rather than divisions and promote intercultural and inter-religious dialogue should be our end goal.

Mr. Chairman,

We are of the conviction that there are prominent measures to promote Tolerance and Non Discrimination :

- There is need for sound legal strategies, as well as planned implementation of this framework.
- States should indeed engage in broad efforts to combat negative stereotypes and discrimination against individuals and groups, and also to promote intercultural understanding.
- The use of education is undoubtedly the most effective instrument to dismantle pervasive social structures based on racial differentiation in order to create a society based on pluralism, tolerance and respect towards other communities
- The media as well must act responsibly when dealing with inter-religious and cross-cultural issues.
- Other positive measures should include training seminars for State agents and media professionals, initiatives aimed at bringing communities together and allowing them to pursue genuine dialogue, such as round tables, working groups and seminars, as well as awareness-raising activities.

In doing so, States should prepare these measures in close collaboration with civil society representatives, who have an important role to play in the fight against intolerance.

We urge the concerned governments to take immediate steps to remedy all violations and manifestations of racism and racial discrimination, and to fully implement the recommendations of independent monitoring mechanisms against racism, in particular the UN committee on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination and the relevant regional mechanism.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the years, the framework of cooperation between the OSCE and its partners has been developing. As regards the work of the Mediterranean Contact Group this year, we appreciate the efforts of Kazakhstan, in promoting the work of the group and implementing a number of concrete initiatives that are of particular interest to the Mediterranean Partners, thereby adding increased momentum to the relationship between the organization and its Mediterranean Partners.

I am confident that such a group of selected participants, and as exemplary organization, will make a valuable contribution to further strengthening the interaction of different cultures and societies.