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**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE  
RUSSIAN FEDERATION AT THE OSCE HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE  
ON TOLERANCE AND NON-DISCRIMINATION (INCLUDING  
HUMAN RIGHTS YOUTH EDUCATION ON TOLERANCE AND  
NON-DISCRIMINATION)**

Tirana, 21 and 22 May 2013

**Opening plenary session: Combating intolerance and discrimination in the  
OSCE area. Implementation of the relevant OSCE commitments**

Mr. Chairperson,

Increasing manifestations of religious intolerance, racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, violent extremism, aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism pose a real threat to security and stability throughout the OSCE region. As experience has shown, solving these problems once and for all using one-off measures does not work because the issues are complex and long-term in nature. It is vital to have a defined strategy to overcome intolerance and to counter hate crime. There is no doubt that the OSCE, with the weighty set of commitments it has built up in this area, can and should make a major contribution to tackling these threats. We should like to welcome the efforts of the Ukrainian Chairmanship and the host country – Albania – who have made it possible to hold this Conference this year.

Unfortunately, currently, the fight against manifestations of intolerance, racism, aggressive nationalism and xenophobia in the OSCE area has often become a case of locking the stable door after the horse has bolted. In spite of the efforts of the authorities, law enforcement agencies and civil society, we can observe reactions to crimes and manifestations of intolerance that have already taken place more often than preventative efforts or the elimination of the reasons underlying these negative phenomena. This imbalance needs to be corrected.

There is not a single State in the OSCE region that can claim to have resolved all of the issues in the area we are examining today. On the contrary, it is alarming that even the “old democracies” have been shown not to have immunity to the spread of radical ideologies and opinions in society.

Today, not only religious minorities, but also those who represent the majority, need protection and assurance of their rights. According to information from many non-governmental organizations, last year alone, over 800 cases of intolerance towards Christians and desecration of Christian holy sites were recorded in Western European States.

We should also like to draw your attention to the issue of the situation of Christians in many Middle Eastern and North African countries. Intolerance and outbursts of violence are to a significant extent consequences of the complex socio-political processes that have taken place there. Some of those who actively participated in these processes were our OSCE partners. Meanwhile, the purportedly tolerant European community, having actively promoted democratic reforms in Arab States, was ultimately not prepared to receive the resulting wave of refugees from those countries – people who had fled for their lives because of growing ethnic and religious extremism.

Outbursts of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, which even the “safest” countries are unable to manage, are extremely alarming.

According to human rights organizations, an increase in Islamophobic and anti-Semitic incidents can be seen in Belgium, France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and several other European States. Human rights activists have counted more than 30 organizations in the United States of America that produce propaganda on the theory of a “Muslim conspiracy”. According to the Collective against Islamophobia in France (Collectif contre l’islamophobie en France), in recent years, many cases, including the defilement of cemeteries, arson attacks on and vandalism of cultural centres and mosques, death threats, and the desecration of the Koran, have been recorded in that country. Increasing rates of anti-Semitic crime can be seen in France, Hungary, the United States and a number of other countries. In the Netherlands, half of all recorded cases of online intolerance relate to anti-Semitic websites. These are only a few examples.

Further evidence of increasingly radicalized views of certain sections of the public in Europe, including in European Union States, can be seen in the fact that nationalist parties have parliamentary seats.

Discrimination against ethnic minorities and increasing aggressive nationalism, which is particularly bolstered by the policies of the ruling élite in several European States, contradicts many OSCE commitments as well as those of other international organizations. These phenomena lead to a division of society into first and second class citizens. Some see themselves as the masters and enjoy preferential treatment and privileges, while others must be patient and loyal, contenting themselves, for example, with choosing from a list of professions permitted to them by those in power. Recent amendments to the Citizenship Law in Latvia, which make it possible to revoke citizenship through an administrative procedure on grounds of disloyalty to the State, bring to mind the 1930s.

We are particularly concerned that the public, and above all young people, could view State radical nationalism, historical revisionism, glorification of Nazi collaborators and the lack of audible reaction from many OSCE participating States to racist and nationalist incidents as a sign of agreement with such negative phenomena.

In Russia, there are also cases of aggressive nationalism and xenophobia, which require constant joint efforts on the part of the authorities and civil society. The Russian authorities’ dim view of such incidents, which is clearly and concisely communicated to the public, is also important in this regard. Furthermore, the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation recognizes political, ideological, racial, nationalist or religious motivations, or hatred towards any social group, as aggravating circumstances when a crime is committed. We have accumulated some positive experience in the fight against hate crime,

as well as against the distribution of racist and xenophobic materials in the media. We are ready to share this during the sixth plenary session of this Conference.

In modern society, growing xenophobia, racist attitudes, and manifestations of racial, ethnic and religious intolerance are so interlinked that without a system-wide approach to resolving these issues, it is impossible to achieve effective results. OSCE participating States should not only severely punish such practices and perform thorough investigations of all cases of intolerance, but should also work together to develop preventative mechanisms. We hope that the work carried out during this Conference will enable progress in this area.

Thank you for your attention.