



**Introductory Statement by Ambassador Christian Strohal
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***Session 6: Fighting racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance and
discrimination: inter alia, the role of education, the media and education***

OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism and on Other Forms of Intolerance
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Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen and Colleagues

It is a great pleasure for me to address this session on fighting intolerance and discrimination, a session that is significant in both its theme and its timing. I say timing because we are witnessing increasingly violent manifestation of racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance across the OSCE region. Let me draw your attention to a number of cases that have occurred in just this past month, cases that are troubling not only for the violence they demonstrate, but because of the message of prejudice and hate they send to the victim and to the community the victim belongs to; and because of the indifference or fear they show with regard to developing an immediate response.

- Just a few weeks ago, a 15 year old Roma boy was stabbed with a Samurai sword by a group of six youths dressed in military clothing. He was stabbed in public, while riding a bus, in daylight. Although he suffered life-threatening injuries, passengers left the bus after the attack without offering any help.

- Also in the last month, a 17 year-old Sikh boy was attacked by five men who called him by a racial slur and assaulted him. The attackers removed the boy's turban and cut off his hair with a knife, violating the Sikh faith which says hair is to be worn unshorn and in a turban. He was attacked because of his religious convictions.
- Also in the last month, a prominent editorial director was beaten severely by seven men as he was walking hand-in-hand with his boyfriend in a busy downtown core. Dozens of onlookers ignored the violence – an incident known disgracefully as 'gay-bashing'.

It is my hope that this panel on *'Fighting racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance and discrimination'*, with a specific view on the role of *education*, the *media* and *law enforcement* will bring together solid recommendations and avenues for action. It is only through concrete measures, vigorous action, and sustained and resolute commitment between all stakeholders involved, that such acts of hate-motivated violence can be effectively responded to, and in my hope, prevented.

Let me also add that the OSCE recognizes that intolerance and exclusion are not the sole burden of ethnic minorities. Intolerance is multidimensional and intersectional in nature, and affects individuals on the grounds of their religion or belief, their background or status, their sexual orientation or their particular abilities. The OSCE will focus its efforts to ensure the recognition and protection of all groups affected by discrimination and intolerance within the OSCE region. During the next Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in September, the special day on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination will focus on multidimensional and cross-cutting forms of intolerance exclusion.

The ODIHR has been working vigorously in its activities to combat racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance and discrimination. I would like to briefly recall the mandate and priorities that the ODIHR was given under the Decisions on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination of the OSCE Ministerial Council in 2004 and 2005. The ODIHR was tasked to:

- Serve as a collecting point for information, statistics and legislation;
- Disseminate information, findings and 'good practices' aimed at preventing and responding to racism, xenophobia and discrimination.
- Monitor incidents motivated by racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance and report to the OSCE's permanent Council and at the HDIM on information received;
- Offer assistance to OSCE participating States and NGOs in their efforts to combat racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance.

In implementing these taskings, the ODIHR is cognizant of the fact that many well-established organizations such as the EU Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination have a vast amount of acquired experience and expertise through their involvement in the fight against racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance. This is why, in the ODIHR's efforts to establish a Programme on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination we conducted a *Comparative Study on International Action against Racism, Xenophobia, anti-Semitism and Intolerance in the OSCE Region* so that we could assume a role that would build on the existing efforts of organizations and avoid duplication. I am pleased to be joined by Mr. Doudou Diène and Ms. Anastasia Crickley, whom we have worked with in her capacity as the Chair of the EUMC Management Board and also in her new role as one of the Personal Representatives of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office.

I would like to also stress the vital role of numerous stakeholders including governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and professional practitioners such as teachers and journalists. All concerned have an integral role to play in the fight against all forms of intolerance.

Let us now turn to the specific issues that should be discussed by this session:

- Education and Training
- Role of the media

- Law enforcement

1. The Role of Education and Training:

The ODIHR has identified education and training as a key tool to enhance the level of awareness of racism and intolerance-based incidents including root causes and ways to prevent this. Education, be it formal or non-formal, does not only imply the dissemination of knowledge; it also involves enhancing capacities and empowering individuals, minority communities and civil society organisations.

Recent activities of the ODIHR in the area of education include:

- The provision of *training for NGOs* to increase their capacity to monitor and report on *hate crimes*. The ODIHR participated in a training session on the monitoring and reporting of hate crimes organized by the European branch of the International Lesbian and Gay Association. It also conducted a pilot training in cooperation with INACH (International Network against Cyber Hate) for civil society representatives willing to establish a complaints bureau on hate on the Internet. The ODIHR will also pilot a training seminar later this month for civil society representatives dealing with various forms of intolerance from the OSCE region.
- Addressing issues of *segregated schools and classes* for Roma children in round table meetings and analyzing the situation of education of Roma children in Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary.
- The ODIHR's Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief has undertaken several initiatives to promote *inter-cultural and inter-faith dialogue and understanding* including through the development of the Website Guide to Tolerance Education and is now working on an evaluation of initiatives relating to tolerance education.

The following proposals could be subject to discussion during this session:

1. An enhanced focus should be given to *intercultural and interfaith dialogue*. Open communication channels and exchange are needed in order to establish local, regional and national fora that guarantee appropriate and ongoing dialogue, because we believe that people talking to each other will develop respect, understanding and appreciation of their respective differences.
2. *School curricula* covering aspects of diversity, mutual understanding and respect are needed at all levels of formal education. ODIHR hopes to have the support of relevant governmental institutions such as education ministries and institutions in developing tolerance education as a feature of curricula at the primary, secondary and higher education levels.
3. In order to facilitate speedy *integration* of newcomers and migrants into the receiving country the promotion of *language courses* would constitute an appropriate tool. Above all, policies and practices must be developed so that we move beyond the idea of mere tolerance to embrace a model of *intercultural education* – a model built on the foundation of understanding, appreciation and *respect for diversity*. These recommendations were recently made at the Human Dimension Seminar on Migration and Integration.
4. *Guidance and support* aiming to implement intercultural education in a sustainable manner and to evaluate its impact.

2. The Role of the Media:

Media plays an extensive role in the 'informal education' of the population. Deliberate or careless use of stereotypes or prejudice fuels latent and dormant attitudes of intolerance. As such, the media must recognize its influence, and strive to follow clear and defined *codes of conduct*. There is always something positive and negative to report on events interesting for the public. A *balanced approach* is needed – an approach that stays close to the information and away from labeling minority communities in a generic and negative manner.

The Roma community in particular is often portrayed negatively in the press. The empowerment, inclusion and access of this community to media channels represents a

promising prospect for ensuring *balanced reporting* on this community. The ODIHR's Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues has commissioned two *studies* to document the positive and less-positive '*lessons learnt*' in the portrayal of Roma in the media. An introduction of these studies was given at the NGO Forum on Tuesday this week in Sevilla.

I propose the following aspects to be considered during our subsequent discussions:

1. Inviting prosecutors to use the framework of legal instruments to act against severe forms of *hate speech in the media*.
2. Enhancing *dialogue* between media representatives, governments and representatives of minorities in order to address the use of stereotypes and bias in reporting, and discuss positive and appropriate alternatives.
3. Recognizing the crucial role of the OSCE's Representative on Freedom of the Media can play, particularly through the publication of guides such as *The Media Freedom Internet Cookbook*, in highlighting good practices for media education, where the Internet can be used as a preventative tool to overcome prejudices and stereotypes.

3. The Role of Law Enforcement:

Law enforcement officials - as the first respondents to hate crimes - play one of the most central roles in tackling hate crimes. The ODIHR has therefore carried out a number of activities targeted to law enforcement officials, including:

- Designing and implementing a training programme on '*Policing multi-ethnic communities*,' targeted to police officers, local administrations and Roma NGOs which aims to improve cooperation between Roma communities and the police, and to produce a *Guidance Manual* on this topic.
- Developing a law enforcement officer training programme on combating hate crimes, consisting of a curriculum which promotes hate crime awareness, good practices in hate crime responses, engagement of community partners in responding to hate crimes and the development of a hate crime data collection, analysis and dissemination process.

I hope that this session will be informed by an exchange on the following issues:

1. Establishing long-term and ongoing *training of law enforcement personnel* in order to increase the confidence and efficacy of police officers in responding to hate crimes;
2. The creation of a *specialized cadre of law enforcers* with expertise on the many faces of discrimination including the violent manifestations of hate against minority groups;
3. Encouraging cooperation between *informal local / regional networks* of relevant community groups, law enforcement officers and jurists to ensure that society receives the message that hate-motivated crimes will be reported, investigated and punished appropriately.

The ODIHR is aware that many more innovative measures can and should be taken. I and the ODIHR staff welcome all proposals and suggestions for concrete and sustainable activities. This Conference is witness to our shared determination that racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance are phenomena that need to be tackled with our undivided attention and full creativity.

In all of this, I cannot underline enough that *'implementation'* is the key message here. I invite OSCE participating States, but also Institutions and field missions to develop robust partnerships and actively engage in these future activities.

Thank you.