

OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
Warsaw, 23 September – 4 October 2013

Working session 2: Tolerance and non-discrimination II – Review of the implementation of commitments on promotion of mutual respect and understanding:

Ms. Karine Soudjian
Head of Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues Division
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia

- Prevention and responses to hate crimes in the OSCE area

Mr./Ms. Moderator,

Combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination is still on the agenda of the OSCE member countries because of serious threats that these vices pose to international security. Threats to human security on the basis of racist or xenophobic hatred must be perceived not as crimes against specific individuals but must be viewed from the perspective of potential serious challenges that they can bring about in undermining international stability. Hate crime included many components related to violation of human rights: these can be crimes committed against representatives of various ethnic groups, propaganda of hatred in mass media and/or internet, destruction of religious or cultural monuments etc. Nowadays, we more often see hate-motivated crimes and incidents targeting Christians and their property, such crimes include not only destruction of Christian monuments, but physical violence and prosecution of Christians in general and the clergy specifically.

One of the subtle forms of hate dissemination and cultivation of racism and racial hatred toward other nations is the “institutionalization” of racism through openly encouraging prosecution of other ethnic or religious groups, nations or races, or their specific representatives, as well as war propaganda and direct calls to destruction and annihilation of other nations and their historical and cultural heritage. This is exactly what is happening these days in Azerbaijan, whose leadership not only is actively engaged in and “successfully” implements in anti-Armenian racial hatred and war propaganda, but also punishes those of its own citizens who dare to establish contacts with Armenians.

Mr./Ms. Moderator,

The Government of Armenia condemns discrimination in all its forms and manifestations. The national legislation ensures equality of all citizens of the country in all spheres of life without any discrimination, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin. In its activities, the Government of Armenia pursues a policy, which prohibits any manifestation of discrimination or its trends against individuals, groups or institutes.

Armenia has ratified Protocol No.12 to the European Convention on Human Rights. It has thus already given all persons under its jurisdiction the possibility of taking complaints regarding alleged discrimination to an international judicial institution.

We welcome the recent adoption by Human Rights Council the resolution on Genocide Prevention. In our view, this resolution may provide very useful points of references for further updating our joint commitments on the protection national and religion minorities and combating racial discrimination and intolerance.

Mr./Ms. Moderator,

Armenia assumed chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 16 May this year and it will last until 13 November. The priorities of the Armenian Chairmanship have been defined in response to the challenges that we face today with regard to the protection of human rights, strengthening of democracy and respect of the rule of law. Combating racism and xenophobia in Europe and promoting European values through intercultural dialogue are among Armenian priorities. Racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance grossly violate human dignity and give rise to tensions in European societies. History has repeatedly shown that negligence in addressing these phenomena may tear the fabric of society, thus negatively affecting its cohesion and threatening fundamental human rights.

On 21-22 October, Armenia will organize a High-Level Conference on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Intolerance in Europe. The purpose of the conference is to reflect upon racism and xenophobia in political discourse, as well as issues related to combating hate speech and racial stereotypes in the social networks and media, and considers the role of national and European mechanisms in combating racism and xenophobia in media and politics.

Mr./Ms. Moderator,

Fight against hate, racism, xenophobia and discrimination should be universal and cover not only intra- but also interstate realms and cases which concern thousands of people. Therefore, it is not only a question of physical danger for one concerned side, but this is an issue of responsibility before all of us: how to save younger generations from hatred and intolerance.

Thank you