

**OSCE Chairmanship Conference on Intolerance and  
Discrimination against Muslims  
Cordoba, 9 – 10 October 2007**

**Opening Session**

**Chairman-in-Office and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation of Spain  
Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos**

Good morning,

President of the Junta de Andalucía, Lady-Mayor of Córdoba, Secretary General of the Arab League, High Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations for the Alliance of Civilizations, Representatives of the Organization, Authorities, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends...

Welcome to Spain and to the city of Córdoba that once again hosts a Human Dimension Conference of the Organization for the Security and Cooperation in Europe. In 2005 we held a Conference on Anti-Semitism and other forms of Intolerance. Today we address Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims.

I am particularly pleased to be here in Córdoba, a city to which I am linked both personally and professionally, because its history takes us back to a period of harmonious co-existence, where culture, science and technology flourished as a result of the fluid interaction of cultures and creeds. Córdoba was the stage for the splendour of Al-Andalus, one of the most brilliant examples of intercultural creativity of world history. We would today like to see Cordoba as a reference point of mutual respect and coexistence of Muslims, Jews and Christians.

All these reasons explain why the “Casa Arabe” is in Córdoba, an interinstitutional initiative devoted to public diplomacy, that, together with the OSCE and the Ministry of External Affairs and Cooperation, have collaborated in the organization and towards the success of this Conference. I recognise the Bishop of this city, who has been instrumental in this task, and represents the spirit of tolerance and respect that guides us today.

Welcome to Córdoba and the Conference on Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, where we will analyse proposals and measures to combat discriminatory behaviours against human dignity, as well as the causes that produce them.

Racism and discrimination impoverish and violate our democratic rights, be they against Muslims or against those that hold different beliefs. The OSCE contributes towards promoting encounters that help avoid the erosion of democratic legitimacy, plurality and cultural co-existence: values all that conform the mosaic of responsible decision-making in advanced societies, with regard to the challenges posed by globalization and its pressing deficiencies. Among these values, the Human Dimension, that helps us to promote a culture of peace and tolerance, respect and co-existence from the Atlantic to Central Asia and the Mediterranean, where dialogue, legality and diversity triumph over violence, oppression or discrimination. The 56 countries integrated in OSCE, as well as the Associated Countries, defend peace, freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

Ladies and Gentlemen....

“Without respect for diversity, dialogue is useless... without dialogue, diversity is unobtainable” as Ramin Jahanbegloo said. The XXIst Century needs to revitalize the human dimension. This is why the UUNN and OSCE reinforce civic commitment to human rights and promote intercultural co-existence that so enriches our lives, fosters cooperation and increases our security.

This Conference of the Spanish Chairmanship in Office takes place in this context of vital importance to human development. Special mention must be made to the forthcoming meeting, in Madrid, of the First Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations next January. You are all invited to participate in an encounter that will try to update our cultural and social relationships, with a view to clearing up misconceptions and abolishing stereotypes.

The OSCE has a special interest in the agenda on intolerance and discrimination. The Cordoba Declaration on Anti-Semitism and other forms of Intolerance underlined that “certain forms of discrimination may have specific characteristics and require individual definition, but the methods to combat them are in many cases similar, as are the efforts that need to be made on vigilance, data collection, strengthening the legal framework, education, channels of communications and improved dialogue.”

The OSCE Bucharest Conference this year, combating Discrimination and promoting Mutual respect, devoted three sessions to analyze Anti-Semitism, discrimination against Muslims, Christians and other communities. Both Cordoba and Bucharest are milestones in combating discrimination against Muslims.

We are pleased to note the international institutions and NGOs are daily more aware of discrimination and intolerance against Muslims. OSCE made public its concerns in this respect in the 2002 Ministerial conference, which condemned the growing number of discriminatory and violent actions against Muslims. Two years later its Permanent Council recommended. That the OIDDH closely follow this phenomenon. It has concerned the Council of Europe and the European Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, now known as the European Agency for Fundamental Rights, as well, upon observing intolerant and discriminatory behaviour against Muslims. It is logical that we avoid the risk of a new racism appearing, that will disrupt social relations and damage human rights and our very security.

Since 2001, the Reports of the European Observatory against Racism and Xenophobia bear witness to the increase in anti-Muslim attitudes and behaviour patterns. The Council of Europe devoted its attention to this phenomenon in 2005 in its Report on 2Islamophobia and its consequences on Youth”.