

**Statement by the Head of the Delegation of Cyprus,  
Dr. Kypros Chrysostomides, Minister,  
Government Spokesman  
OSCE Conference on Anti-semitism and on Other Forms of Intolerance,  
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It is utterly disappointing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century to still see phenomena of religious intolerance and discrimination. Despite long millennia of human development, mixing of civilizations and cultures, revolutions, the holocaust, the emergence of strict rules of international law, humanitarian law following devastating world wars, which produced the Charter of the UN, the European Convention of Human Rights, recently the European Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Statute of the ICC, unfortunately mankind is still in need of implementing non-discrimination for all citizens of this earth. These common rules and instruments should have eliminated all kinds of discrimination and violations of human rights. Alas, mankind despite significant progress has failed so far to achieve an overall level of tolerance.

I join in expressing our profound appreciation to the Spanish Government for choosing this particular venue, in itself a symbol of fruitful coexistence of great religions, a town that has its mark to mankind.

I take pride coming from a corner of the world where cultures, religions and civilizations met and continue to meet in a fruitful way. Cyprus was for centuries a place where people of different religions and cultures lived in harmony respecting each others' traditions and institutions. This spirit has survived the difficult times Cyprus went through in its often turbulent history. Even after our country has been itself a victim of discrimination on all counts, as established by the European Court of Human Rights, in the recent decades of ongoing occupation of part of our country, religion was never part of the political problem faced by Cyprus. The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus, legislation, government practices, the educational system and the overall attitude of our society leave little room for the growth of phenomena of such intolerance.

However no society is immune and the effort to combat intolerance is never ending. Governments and authorities need to adhere to international law, the rule of law and human rights in intra-state relations which are necessary defenses against repetitions of crimes against humanity such as genocide or ethnic cleansing.

Bringing national legislation in line with such standards is a necessary prerequisite for further Government action.

Our system of education aims at producing people with a strong democratic conscience and an acute sense of responsibility and social awareness. History

and human rights education curricula contain the lessons to be derived from the great upheavals of history and in particular crimes committed against humanity in the Twentieth Century.

I wish to highlight the important role of civil society in this respect with the active support of the Government to Non-Governmental Human Rights Organizations, dealing with the protection of vulnerable groups such as foreigners and members of minorities.

A key institution in Cyprus on issues of tolerance is that of the Ombudsman's Office. By decision of the Government all bodies are instructed to implement the recommendations issued by this Office. A monitoring procedure has been established by the Council to ensure such implementation.

On the role of media, our Government observes that both publicly controlled and independent media abide by the law and conform to policies promoting tolerance. Self-regulatory bodies also bear a significant responsibility in this respect.

Cypriots, desire beyond ethnic or religious differences with a common allegiance to their common home, to enjoy fully an independent membership in the EU, for the benefit of all its legal inhabitants, liberated from suffocating external controls and away from partition and apartheid. Let us all work together for an "Alliance of Civilisations" as Prime Minister Zapatero put it. For a Civilisation of Civilisations. We share the views expressed by the Foreign Minister of Luxemburg Art present chairing the EU Council. Finally allow me, Mr. Chairman, to congratulate you and through you the OSCE and its institutions for their untiring efforts and leading role in promoting tolerance and non-discrimination.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.