



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Session 8: Education and Awareness- Raising in the Promotion of Human Rights**

As prepared for delivery by Fred Turner  
to the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
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Mr./Madam Moderator,

The OSCE increasingly has focused on education as a means of promoting human rights and combating intolerance. We support efforts to increase tolerance through a better understanding of cultural differences. By discussing human rights in forums such as this one, we can better highlight not only areas of concern, but areas of significant improvement.

In this vein, we must note the important work of the OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is helping to heal the divisive wounds of war through education. The Mission provides valuable support to the government and local communities as they work to make the educational system better equipped to handle the diverse needs of their students.

In Kosovo, the OSCE is working to train preschool teachers on human rights, including with respect to children, non-discrimination, and gender equality. Young children have yet to firmly establish their behavioral patterns and human rights education can help to change societal attitudes towards minorities and women.

The OSCE mission in Georgia also established human rights education programs to train teachers that were operating within the South Ossetia conflict region before hostilities broke out in August. We strongly support these efforts of the OSCE to assist participating States in cultivating attitudes of tolerance and understanding rather than suspicion and mistrust.

To assist participating States to overcome intolerance and discrimination through education, ODIHR has published several guides, including "Education on the Holocaust and on anti-Semitism" and the "Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools."

ODIHR also has developed technical assistance programs in cooperation with a number of partners to support educators in their efforts to address contemporary anti-Semitism, including country-specific teaching material for seven OSCE states.

Efforts to develop much needed education materials to address discrimination against Muslims are also in the works, including consultations with educators and civil society.

It must be noted that education against anti-Semitism and related forms of intolerance is not the only answer to fighting these problems, though. Through better law enforcement, and legal prosecutions using laws already in force, speedy condemnation of incidents by public officials, the collection of better hate crimes statistics, and, critically, political will, racism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia more generally can be reduced.

The OSCE has also worked to educate members of civil society and the law enforcement community of their role in upholding human rights. This year in Serbia, for example, the OSCE provided diversity training to the police force to maximize their capabilities to prosecute hate crimes and promote human rights in their country.

In combating intolerance, training civil society members to correctly identify, monitor, and report hate crimes and other acts of discrimination has been critical to addressing the rise in prejudice and discrimination taking place throughout the OSCE region.

While the United States has a federal system, and as such, we have no national education curricula, we support the work of non-governmental organizations and of our individual states to promote tolerance and promote respect for diversity and human rights in schools throughout our country.

On the important issue of human rights awareness, it is critical that we, as participating States, share our successful initiatives. We can learn from each other and from OSCE leadership on accurate monitoring, preventing the duplication of existing programs, and providing assistance to others interested in existing models that address common problems. In the tolerance arena, ODIHR's Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Information System – or TANDIS – is one mechanism that serves as a clearinghouse of information on current efforts to address tolerance and non-discrimination, including country reports, national action plans, legislation, and international obligations and commitments.

We encourage all OSCE participating States to join us in commending both OSCE and ODIHR for their critical work in spearheading efforts to promote human rights education across the region.