

**DELEGATION OF TURKEY**

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ÖMÜR ORHUN,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF TURKEY TO THE OSCE,  
HEAD OF DELEGATION OF TURKEY AT THE  
OSCE CONFERENCE ON ANTI-SEMITISM**

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At the outset, I would like to thank the Bulgarian Chairmanship and our German hosts, as well as other contributors, for the enormous amount of work that have gone into organizing this Conference. We extend our full support for the success of this gathering.

The level of participation and active involvement of governments, international organizations and the civil society at the preceding OSCE conferences on anti-Semitism and racism last year and at this Conference demonstrate their political will and resolve to address and work together against anti-Semitism. It is now time to translate this resolve into action. We hope our deliberations here will help us to identify and use effective ways and means to deal with this issue.

The OSCE region has witnessed in the past many conflicts fuelled by hatred, intolerance, sectarianism and extreme ideologies. Unfortunately, manifestations of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and discrimination continue to pose a serious threat to the basic values and to the democratic fabric of our societies, thus endangering peace, stability and security in our region.

Turkey is fully committed to the fight against this phenomena together with the international community. Although anti-Semitism in particular is traditionally alien to Turkish people, our firm position against this specific threat wherever it occurs was reiterated by Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül, both at the OIC Summit in Malasia and in his message on the occasion of the 58<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN.

We heard today alarming statements and reports on the rise of anti-Semitism, including its violent manifestations in OSCE countries in varying degrees. What causes additional concern is that not only extremist circles and parties, but also certain segments of the society and the media seem to be fuelling such tendencies. Economic and social factors, as well as the utilization of advanced communication technologies make our societies even more vulnerable to the spread of prejudices and hatred.

Therefore, an effective strategy to combat racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and discrimination cannot solely rely on legal and judicial measures. Breeding grounds of these phenomena should be eradicated through pro-active positive action aimed at countering prejudices and promoting human values, tolerance and respect for diversity.

As I underlined last year in this forum, harmony and welfare are nurtured when people from different backgrounds make communication a priority, taking time to express and listen to each other's views and interests, acknowledging and tolerating differences, while at the same time seeking out commonalities that can help build strong and enduring relationships that promote cooperation.

The desired level of respect and harmony, on the other hand, can only be achieved if there exists strong political will. Additionally, active involvement of the civil society is a must. Our primary tools in an effective long term strategy towards this end are targeted education and media. The first step should be overcoming existing prejudices towards one another. Eventually, tolerance, acceptance, respect for the other and inclusiveness will become part of our daily life and political practice.

I am pleased to note that more than 500 years long experience of Turks and Jews is a living example of such inter-religious and inter-cultural harmony, respect and tolerance.