

**S t a t e m e n t**  
**by the Delegation of the Republic of Bulgaria**  
**at the OSCE Conference on Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination**  
**Session 1, Vienna, September 4, 2003**

Mr. Chairman,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first of all express our satisfaction with the timely convening of this conference that our deliberations will substantively contribute to the realization of our common goal - the elimination of racism, xenophobia and discrimination throughout the OSCE area.

Mr. Chairman,

Effective government action to combat racism and discrimination would obviously be impossible without a comprehensive legislative framework. However, even the best legislation would be of limited practical import without efficient institutional mechanisms to implement it. Moreover, both the legislative and the institutional framework would be likely to have only a partial impact if there is no culture of tolerance and mutual respect within the whole society. Therefore, the consistent promotion of such a culture, notably through education and awareness raising, is indispensable if our efforts are to succeed.

This, in short, is the concept which has determined the activities of successive governments in Bulgaria for more than a decade in their efforts to prevent and eradicate racism and discrimination in our country. Evidently, this fundamental goal is relatively easier to attain under the particular circumstances of Bulgaria, which has maintained its model of ethnic tolerance throughout the centuries.

The Government has taken the necessary legal and policy measures to prevent and respond effectively to manifestations of racism and discrimination in our society. The national legislation of the Republic of Bulgaria expressly prohibits acts of racism and discrimination. The constitutional principle providing for non-discrimination on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic self-identity, sex, origin, religion, education, opinion, political affiliation, personal or social status or property status is valid for the entire legal system. This basic principle was further elaborated and expanded through special provisions included in all relevant national laws.

In regard specifically to "hate crime legislation", the Penal Code of the Republic of Bulgaria contains provisions expressly prohibiting propaganda or incitement to racial or national hostility or hatred or to racial discrimination (art.162). It also provides for heavier penalties for instance in cases of violence against another individual or damage to his/her property because of his/her nationality, race or religion.

Furthermore, Bulgaria has ratified the relevant international legal instruments which provide for protection against discrimination, including notably the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The Constitution provides that the international legal instruments to which Bulgaria is a party shall be part of the domestic legislation and shall have priority over those domestic provisions that might contravene them.

In addition, with the aim of enhancing the effectiveness of the existing body of national anti-discrimination legislation, a Draft Law on the Prohibition of Any Form of Discrimination was submitted to the National Assembly for adoption. The text of the draft was elaborated with the active participation of non governmental organizations and incorporates the principles of the relevant European Communities Directives. Among others, the draft envisages the establishment of an independent body – a Commission for the Protection against Discrimination.

As already noted, we perceive education as a vital tool in the prevention of racism and discrimination and in the promotion of intolerance. That is why the Bulgarian government has been giving special attention to the inclusion in school curricula – from the earliest stage – of special programs dedicated to the traditions and culture of the different ethnic groups in our country.

In this context, I would also like to mention as an example of good practice the measures taken by our Ministry of Interior in the field of training of law enforcement personal. A Specialized Commission on Human Rights has been set up at the National Police Service to organize the training of the staff – both senior and other, in the field of human rights and the international standards of work of law enforcement bodies. The study of minority languages – notably Roma – was introduced in the education course at the Academy of the Ministry of Interior. Also, persons of Roma origin receive their education at the Academy of the Ministry of Interior and are thereafter appointed in the structures of the Ministry. The list may be continued, but let me stop here.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, my government is fully aware that whatever its achievements in combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination, however intrinsically stable and successful our Bulgarian ethnic model is, there is always much more to be done. Let me assure all of you – we are determined to persist in our efforts!

Thank you.