

PC.DEL/849/04  
14 September 2004

ENGLISH  
Original: RUSSIAN

**STATEMENT BY THE RUSSIAN DELEGATION AT THE OSCE  
CONFERENCE ON TOLERANCE AND THE FIGHT AGAINST  
RACISM, XENOPHOBIA AND DISCRIMINATION**

Brussels, 13 and 14 September 2004

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Distinguished colleagues,

Permit me to express my gratitude for this opportunity to speak at this important international conference on the problems of combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination. In my short statement, I should like to touch on a number of the educational aspects of this problem.

Today, all countries are, to one degree or another, having to deal with new global challenges. In this situation, education is becoming an even more important instrument for raising the new generation in a spirit of tolerance, recognition of the rights and freedoms of the individual, and respect for national and cultural diversity. It is very important to ensure conditions to enable every human being, on a basis of equality with others, to enjoy all the rights and opportunities for determining both his or her own future as well as the fate of his or her country and the world.

In one of his statements, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan pointed out that no one is born into this world as a racist or a xenophobe. Children learn this from the society surrounding them. Over and against negative stereotypes we must offer positive ones, teaching our children and fellow citizens not to fear diversity but to maintain and nurture it, sweeping away all kinds of pseudo-scientific arguments.

For a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional country like Russia, there is a particular urgency in fostering tolerant attitudes and behaviour, religious broad-mindedness and a love of peace and in preventing and combating extremism in its various forms. A constructive interaction on the part of social groups having different values and espousing different religious and political views can be achieved by devising norms for tolerant behaviour and habits of inter-cultural co-operation.

This is why the President of the Russian Federation has proposed the adoption of a federal action programme entitled "Fostering attitudes of tolerance and preventing extremism in Russian society (2001-2005)" as part of the Russian Federation's national strategy to develop civil society. Under this programme, beginning in 2001, a number of teaching programmes have been formulated, pilot centres have been opened, the situation in the Russian Federation with regard to social tension has been monitored and an effort has been

made to predict potential social risks. In addition, maps indicating regions of social tension have been drawn up.

This programme is aimed at inculcating and strengthening cultural, historic and moral values as a counterweight to such manifestations as ethnic, religious and political intolerance.

Work is proceeding in the Russian Federation on the implementation of the Framework for Action — Education for All, which was adopted at the World Education Forum held in Dakar in 2000. A national plan of action aimed at preventing all forms of discrimination in education has been prepared. The legislative framework along with basic teaching and methodological principles are being improved with a view to ensuring the fullest possible observance of rights and freedoms in the area of education.

In accordance with the Convention against Discrimination in Education, the Russian Federation is making efforts to ensure the possibility of the teaching of and instruction in national languages with the aim of fully developing the human personality and achieving greater respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms through the preservation of national heritage and traditional knowledge and by enabling children to develop a sense of ethno-cultural, national and civilizational identity. At the same time, the exercise of this right must not prevent young persons who belong to national minorities from understanding the culture and language of their country and from participating in the life of society, nor must it be allowed to contribute to an intensification of inter-ethnic tension.

Permit me to mention only some of the basic programmatic aspects of the educational system in the Russian Federation in this area:

- In accordance with an order by Mr. Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, a plan to teach the fundamentals of the world's religions as part of general schooling is being actively discussed;
- The development of a system of integrated education for children with particular educational needs;
- Programmes for HIV-positive children;
- Education on the preservation of the worldwide heritage. Russia has developed an educational model which involves working with children from the kindergarten level to the highest educational institutions. It is only by understanding the values and traditions of other peoples that one can learn to find points of contact and mutual understanding and that one can become tolerant. This work must be begun at as early a stage as possible. It is important that from the outset the young person should have a sense of himself as a part of his nation, his country and the world;
- New school models are being devised and introduced in order that children may learn about the indigenous peoples who in relatively small numbers inhabit remote regions of the Extreme North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation;
- As a joint project with the Council of Europe, the "Black Sea Initiative" has been started in an effort to produce a unified history text book for that region;

- Re-socialization programmes are under way for young offenders held in special institutions;
- There are also programmes to protect the interests of homeless children and orphans;
- Programmes of psychological and pedagogical rehabilitation for children who have been subjected to violence or who are the victims of armed conflicts or terrorist actions. Here, however, we are entering a new stage aimed not only at overcoming the child's psychological problems but, above all, at preventing the child from developing the roots of hatred and a desire to reply to violence with violence.

These subjects must not only be discussed at specialized conferences but they must also be included among various international measures as part of the Decade of Tolerance proclaimed by the United Nations and at meetings of ministers for education and culture and youth forums. There is a particular role to be played here by scientific research aimed at developing innovative methods and educational technologies to deal with this set of problems.

Also of importance to us is UNESCO's experience in devising teaching and methodological material on tolerance, using modern multi-media technologies and animation, depending on the age group targeted.

I should like once again to draw attention to the need to actively involve children and young people in this process. It is important that initiatives in this area started by children and young persons should be given every possible support. It is also necessary to include these topics on the agenda of the annually held UNESCO international youth forums.

The work of the youth forum held as part of the UNESCO conference in Durban provides a vivid example of how much we can accomplish to this end. In Durban we had an opportunity to hear the voices of young people: gypsy children, young Latin Americans, Africans, young persons who have experienced slavery, and young representatives of native peoples. All who heard them were deeply moved as they recounted what it means to personally experience racism and discrimination. However, they were a source of hope to all of us by displaying their determination to rise above these injustices — for their own sake and for the sake of future generations.

There is, however, one further global challenge that must be mentioned today. The events of recent weeks in Russia have once again shown the entire world that children and young persons are the most vulnerable and unprotected group in society. The United Nations Security Council meeting convened in connection with the events at Beslan again heard statements to the effect that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations poses one of the most serious threats to international peace and security and that any acts of terrorism are criminal and cannot be justified, regardless of the motives behind them and regardless of when and by whom they are perpetrated.

Therefore, the most important task facing all countries today is the creation of conditions to allow children and young people to live safely, to combat poverty and to find solutions to other socio-economic problems. As was reiterated in President Putin's statement: "When speaking of terrorism, one must remember that one of its causes lies in unresolved social problems and the low educational level of the younger generation, and occasionally in

the absence of the very possibility of receiving an education". This is a perfect breeding ground for extremism and for the involvement of young people in structures of a criminal and nationalistic orientation.

We must learn to pool our efforts not only in moments of trial. We must be prepared to counter the spread of violence, discrimination and racism. It is necessary to develop within the younger generation the ability to discuss, the ability to discover what one has in common with others and to defend one's interests while at the same time respecting the other person's right not to agree with one's own opinion. Young people must not be allowed to live in a social vacuum.

The need today is for all States to join forces in order that future generations may learn to live in peace, to understand and respect national and religious diversity, to overcome the negative stereotypes of the past and to acquire the skills with which to resolve conflicts without resorting to violence.

In conclusion, I should like to express my gratitude to the organizers of this conference.

Thank you for your attention.