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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement in Response to the Reports of the Three Personal Representatives for Tolerance

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 17, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States joins other delegations in thanking the Personal Representatives for their thoughtful reports and in welcoming them back to the Permanent Council. We appreciate the substantive depth of the reports, and encourage those who have not yet done so to read them carefully.

Ms. Crickley, Ambassador Orhun, Professor Weisskirchen, it is important for all 55 participating States to learn of your accomplishments and your prospects as high-level experts on the tolerance issues in your respective portfolios. The U.S. supports your reappointment in 2006, and we are most interested in your plans for the future.

The OSCE's approach to security is both comprehensive and flexible. It is *comprehensive* because it recognizes that intolerance and discrimination are serious threats to security and stability, which must be addressed through political leadership and cooperation. It is *flexible* because the OSCE can respond quickly through mechanisms like the Personal Representatives to particular threats – such as anti-Semitism, intolerance against Muslims, or racism and xenophobia – as soon as they may arise.

This flexibility requires focused goals and effective strategies. Professor Weisskirchen, we agree with your statement that the Representatives' strategies should include taking time to analyze key problems and to recognize their causes, and then to follow up with a speedy political response.

Flexibility also requires that the Personal Representatives have the resources and the autonomy to take action the moment that action is necessary. At the same time, the Personal Representatives' travel and activities should aim to increase support for OSCE/ODIHR projects on tolerance and non-discrimination. Therefore, there must be good communication and close cooperation between the Representatives and ODIHR.

The United States believes that the Personal Representatives are an important link between OSCE institutions and civil society organizations that fight intolerance at the grassroots level in participating States. Therefore, they should devote more energy to building the capacities of tolerance-related NGOs in their respective fields.

One way they can do this is by organizing roundtables, such as the meeting of Muslim NGOs organized by Ambassador Orhun on the margins of the HDIM in September. The Representatives should lead and moderate the sessions at the roundtables, and, of course, ODIHR advisors should be invited to participate as appropriate.

By sharing with ODIHR advisors their reports on meetings with NGOs and government officials, as well as their own research and expertise, the Personal Representatives can bolster the ODIHR Tolerance Program.

The ODIHR Program is only seven months old, and it needs time to institutionalize its work on education, law enforcement training, legislation review, and data collection. Participating States should support this work and its institutionalization, and should consider drawing on ODIHR expertise and assistance.

In the meantime, events during the second half of this year have brought the problems of racism, xenophobia, and intolerance to the forefront of politics in several OSCE participating States. The OSCE needs the high-level Personal Representatives to draw official attention to these threats – in all their distinct forms – and to spread best practices for countering prejudice and promoting mutual understanding and respect among groups in society.

Ms. Crickley, Professor Weisskirchen, and Ambassador Orhun, your work on behalf of the OSCE to raise awareness and spread best practices is a vital component of our common effort to promote tolerance, mutual understanding and respect for diversity. We wish you success with the activities that you have planned for the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.