

Egyptian Delegation

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OSCE Chairmanship Conference on Intolerance and
Discrimination against Muslims
Cordoba, 9 – 10 October 2007

Statement to Session 1, Intolerance and discrimination against Muslims.
Old prejudices and new targets.

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Moustapha A. Morsi
October 9, 2007.

Excellencies, Mr. Chairman, Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

It is indeed a great honor and pleasure for me to add a few comments to this session of the conference organized by OSCE Chairmanship-in-office. We highly appreciate and value Spain's initiative to drawing together such a remarkable mix of scholars and diplomats in a much needed and deliberate dialogue about intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, an issue far-reaching in its importance to the Islamic world which represents one fifth of the world population and one of the world's two largest communities of faith.

May I remind you that here in this beautiful and historical city of Cordoba, the Arab rule was named the Golden Age of all religions, not only for its economic achievements but also for its intellectual developments. The Islamic World of that era was itself a source of new ideas and contributions in science, philosophy and poetry, and characterized by tolerance, egalitarian spirit and equality, that stimulated the most famous scholars and scientists like Ibn Rushd, ibn Arabi, Ibn Khaldoun, and Maimonids, the most famous Jewish philosopher, and Espinoza, to name only a few.

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since September 11, we have been observing a revival of fallacies such as the "Clash of Civilizations", renouncing that civilization is a common heritage of humanity. They deliberately point to the so-called "Clashes" instead of focusing on the integration of civilizations. It is important to work towards changing the mentality of the "fear of the other" to a frame of mind that embraces our differences and finding harmony in our diversity.

It seems that the intangible heritage of history still exercises, and influences , and even classically conditions the memory and awareness of individuals and people, and therefore of their reciprocal relations.

We do believe that a renewal in historical discourse would help to improve cultural relations between the West and the Muslim World, and consequently the Muslim migrant communities, and taking active responsibility for leading a balanced, informed, public debate about reasons why immigrants are in Europe, the contributions they make, the dignity they deserve as human beings, and barriers they experience, and correcting misconceptions.

The importance of the Cultural dimension of integration is increasingly recognized, and inter-cultural dialogue including inter and intra-faith dialogues became an essential instrument to foster successful integration and counteract racism and extremism. There are practical opportunities to act. The 2008 European year of Intercultural Dialogue can give a major input to the strengthening of activities in this area.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations is a global phenomenon that is not confined to any particular religion, race, or country, and that can be in no way rationalized. It is not possible to justify the condemnation of a religion like Islam, on the basis of acts of individual or small groups that do not represent the mainstream Islamic view.

As Muslims, we condemn all forms of terrorism and we are against aggression no matter who the perpetrators may be, and we deplore innocent civilians being targets of terrorist attacks. This position emanates from the clear rulings of the Holy Koran and the teachings of our prophet in this regard.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Societies require peaceful environment, conducive conditions for development, to fully use their full potentials and to achieve the progress they aspire to. These conditions are threatened in our region by continuous and multiplied regional conflicts providing fertile ground for extremism and terrorism.

We seize this opportunity to call upon the international community to work vigorously on the implementation of international law in the Middle

East region and ensure there are no double standards, in order to guarantee that the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people are returned, as well as the complete withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories. Achieving this will contribute to uprooting the main causes of violence, aggression , anti-western feelings , and extremism , and will help create a climate in which peace, justice, and security are possible for all the communities in this war-torn region.

I think that the active contribution of this conference as well as the cooperation between the OSCE and OIC are vital for a well-based confidence-building process.

It is worth mentioning that the OSCE has appointed three Personal Representatives in 2004 to promote greater tolerance and combat racism, xenophobia, and discrimination across the OSCE region against Islam along with anti-Semitism, Christianity and other religions. The nomination of Ambassador Omur Orhun for the position of Chairman-in-office Personal Representative on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims is regarded as a positive step towards promoting tolerance and combating discrimination in general, and specifically in correcting the distorted image of Islam and Muslims in the Western World.

We shall highly count on Ambassador's Orhun's effective contribution in raising the awareness and promoting the true image of Islam, and how it can coexist peacefully with other religions and Cultures in Europe.
