

DELEGATION OF TURKEY

ENGLISH only

5 September 2003

**CONFERENCE ON RACISM, XENOPHOBIA AND DISCRIMINATION
(Vienna, 4-5 September 2003)**

**Session 4: Information and awareness raising: The role of the media in conveying
and countering prejudice**

Speaking Points

Despite the upsurge in racism, xenophobia and related intolerance, the problems experienced by the targeted groups remain invisible to the general public. Despite improved efforts, media is often indifferent to their plight and racist incidents go rather unnoticed.

Sometimes even the media itself, by selectively listing or misrepresenting facts and spreading false information, further promote racist prejudices against certain groups, foreign communities or their countries of origin. The false images that tend to associate people belonging to certain ethnic, religious, national groups with crime and criminality, women from certain parts of the world with prostitution, Africans with poverty, Muslims with terrorism are widespread. Such examples, unfortunately, do not exclude serious newspapers with high circulation.

Moreover, advocates of racist, extremist, discriminatory, intolerant views and ideologies misuse the media to promote hatred, racism, xenophobia and discrimination. They increasingly resort to the Internet to disseminate information and propaganda, to gain followers, to contact similar organizations in other parts of the world and to encourage racist actions.

Although in several countries the dissemination of racist discourses is prohibited and punished by criminal laws, they can avoid legal obstacles by resorting to Internet providers located in countries where this type of web sites is legal. Video tapes, books and CDs containing racist motives are also made available through online shopping.

Media bears a heavy responsibility for the way in which different sectors of society view each other, since it is an extremely powerful means that has an impact on public. It can play a role also in promoting a culture of tolerance and in countering prejudices and hatred. More responsible journalism practices are therefore much needed.

First of all the media itself should realize the dire need for a change of prevalent attitudes. Strategies should be developed to change the tone and methods of media reporting starting from headlines. Mainstream journalists and editors might lead the way by signing up to editorial policies that seek to promote a culture of tolerance. Self-regulatory codes of conduct would be helpful as a first step. Specialized training introducing non-racist reporting techniques is also needed for journalists. In partnership with civil society, projects for public awareness on race issues and tolerance from a positive angle can be initiated by the media. Experiences and expertise of journalists from different ethnic, religious, national backgrounds can be utilized to reflect the problems of those at the receiving end of intolerance and discrimination.

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Recommendations

- The misuse of print, audio-visual and electronic media and new communication technologies, including the Internet, to incite violence motivated by racial hatred should be condemned.
- Media should be encouraged to avoid stereotyping based on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.
- Media should be encouraged to draw up self-regulatory codes of conduct on the ethics of journalism, setting professional and ethical standards for journalists and broadcasters, prohibiting the instigation to racial discrimination, violence, hatred and intolerance in the media while respecting freedom of speech.
- The dissemination of racist and xenophobic material and incitement to racial hatred and violence through new information and communications technologies, including the Internet should be criminalized.
- Taking into account the trans-boundary effects of electronic media, law enforcement agencies should foster co-operation in identifying, investigating and prosecuting those responsible for such dissemination.
- Participating States should support and encourage the use of the Internet to set up educational and awareness-raising networks to combat racism, xenophobia and discrimination.
- Anti-racist hotlines should be established.
- Members of the print, audio-visual and electronic media should receive training to understand and combat racism.