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Review of implementation by participating states of OSCE commitments related to tolerance and non-discrimination

Intervention by Michael Whine, representative of the European Jewish Congress

Mr Chairman,

Much progress has been made in implementing the Berlin, Brussels and Cordoba commitments entered into by member states. We should pay tribute to the professionalism and dedication of those who have worked hard to help put in place mechanisms aimed at reducing the level of antisemitic discourse, and violent incidents.

The Holocaust education programme is proceeding and the educational material produced will eventually reach many schoolchildren. Only if children learn about the horror that racism leads to can they begin to understand, and reject its modern manifestations. They will also perhaps understand the moral imperatives that necessitated the need for a Jewish state in Israel, as well as the historical ones.

The training scheme for law enforcement agencies is also being run out through some member states. Historically some police forces served to enforce governments' will upon populations. They can now begin to learn how to protect their citizens' human rights and protect minorities, particularly Jewish minorities, against racist violence.

The European Union Monitoring Centre's Working Definition of Antisemitism, previewed at Cordoba, and distributed to European Union member states should assist law enforcement agencies to recognise antisemitism when they encounter it. Importantly it recognises the changing directions from which antisemitism comes,

and which has confounded some police forces in their approach to investigating and prosecuting antisemitic crime.

However, one area identified by ODIHR and the EUMC has not been addressed; that of monitoring antisemitic, and indeed all racially and religiously motivated crime.

In its latest report on antisemitism within the EU, the EUMC reports that there appears to be 'a serious problem of underreporting, particularly in reference to official systems of data collection' and that due to 'different levels and methods of data collection mechanisms in the Member States of the EU it is not possible in many cases to provide official or even unofficial statistics and thus comment on trends'. It attributes this, in part, to states' failure to use the definition which provides them with a practical template to use.

States are therefore working in the dark. But the Jewish communities aren't. We know that antisemitic discourse has been worsening and that violence has been rising. The Jewish press throughout the OSCE region regularly report on attacks on Jews and Jewish institutions and as a consequence communities are growing apprehensive. Some are beginning to wonder if we, once again, have reason to fear life in Europe.

In this area states have failed to implement the commitments and agreements they entered into, and as a consequence are failing to protect one of the fundamental freedoms a democratic states accords its citizens.

We know it's not easy. Monitoring racist violence and incidents **properly** requires consistent and accurate reporting by police. It requires analytical tools and computers and people trained to use them. But most importantly it requires governments to have the will to do it.

In this area Jewish NGOs have considerable experience and some of us are now asked to advise our own national police forces on the systems we employ.

We will gladly assist other law enforcement agencies within the OSCE area as well. We all need to know what is happening within our societies otherwise we are fighting the problem with one hand tied behind our backs.

Mr Chairman, the problem will not go away; all the indications are that it may get worse before it gets better. States should now implement the commitments they have entered into.