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LUXEMBOURG TO THE OSCE, AT THE OSCE HIGH-LEVEL
CONFERENCE ON TOLERANCE AND NON-DISCRIMINATION**

Astana, 29 and 30 June 2010

**Plenary session 7: Strategies for promoting tolerance and understanding,
inter-ethnic and intercultural dialogue, including its religious dimension, in
the OSCE area**

Madam Moderator,

Since I plan to be brief and I think I should be able to respect the time-limit set for us, I can permit myself, in this first statement to the Conference, to thank the Kazakh Government for its generous hospitality and for the perfect organization, in co-operation with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, of this important gathering, but also to state that I support entirely the views expressed by Spain on behalf of the European Union at the opening session.

I should like, in the context of this seventh session, which should deal, *inter alia*, with measures that have been taken or should be taken by the participating States to promote tolerance, mutual understanding and intercultural, interreligious and inter-ethnic dialogue, to speak briefly of the experience and situation of my country, which, fortunately, does not often appear in the headlines in connection with the incidents or discrimination of all kinds that we have been discussing these last two days.

However, for those among you who are not aware of this, I should like to mention that Luxembourg, for more than half a century already, has been a country with a very high rate of immigration. Today, migrants represent more than 40 per cent of the resident population, which amounts to only just half a million. To these must be added those who cross the border every day from the neighbouring countries to work in Luxembourg, with the result that migrants currently represent more than 50 per cent of the working population in Luxembourg.

A study of the history of Luxembourg reveals that, with a 40 per cent foreign resident population and with more than 130,000 people crossing the border every day of the week to work in our country, Luxembourg has seen its society change and evolve, and become enriched by contributions from other cultures, while conserving an identity of its own, yet open to others. This openness has been reflected in an evolving relationship with the religious

confessions, covered by agreements between the State and the Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed and Orthodox churches and the Jewish and Muslim faiths.

It is above all during the last few decades that this largely positive development has taken place. Our society has changed under the influence of other nationalities and cultures, without which the economic growth of Luxembourg would not have been possible.

This does not mean that Luxembourg is a paradise as far as integration is concerned. Diversity is not accepted automatically. But it is a laboratory for diversity that works. It works because, alongside Luxemburgish, the whole indigenous population speaks French and German fluently, and the young people today, of course, speak English too.

It works also because, in recent years, Luxembourg has been very active in the legislative field and has adopted and modernized its domestic legislation. No later than in August 2008 it adopted a new law on the free movement of persons and on immigration, involving a reform of the system of work permits and recognizing the need, at the same time, to favour legal immigration and combat illegal immigration. In December 2008, it adapted its legislation on the reception of immigrants and on integration to the new international and European realities and requirements. The new law requires, *inter alia*, the preparation of a multi-annual national action plan on integration and the combating of discrimination, which must identify the main areas for action and the political measures to be taken. At about the same time, Luxembourg adopted a new law on nationality, the most innovative aspect of which was the introduction of dual nationality, notably permitting migrants who plan to remain in Luxembourg to obtain Luxembourg nationality under relatively liberal conditions while keeping their original nationalities, and thus facilitating their access to, and exercise of, all the political rights enjoyed by national citizens.

However, Luxembourg has not been taking action only at the national level. As a founder member of the European Union, it participates fully in the activities of the Union which, one should remember, was committed from the outset to the fundamental values of tolerance, non-discrimination, freedom of expression and freedom of thought, conscience, religion and conviction. The prohibition of all forms of discrimination is among the basic principles reaffirmed in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which now forms an integral part of the basic European treaties.

Luxembourg has supported the Alliance of Civilizations from the start and is a member of the "Friends of the Alliance". The Alliance demonstrates that there is an alternative to a confrontation between civilizations. Bridges exist, to use the image that you employed, Madam Moderator, when introducing this session, and it is our task to construct, together, the roads that will enable us to cross these bridges in order to promote mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence.

Thank you for your attention.