

DELEGATION OF TURKEY

25 September 2007

HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
(Warsaw, 24 September-5 October)

Working Session 2: Combating intolerance and discrimination and promoting mutual respect and understanding – implementation of commitments

STATE OF PLAY

Mr. Moderator,

The review of the state of implementation of commitment of commitments is the compass of the HDIM process. Not knowing you where you are will render you directionless and haphazard. Fortunately, that is not the case thanks to this session.

As we review implementation of the commitments in the field of combating racism, xenophobia, discrimination and other forms of intolerance, none of us can be proud of having societies immune to these ills of mankind nor can we be satisfied to have achieved the level of implementation of our commitments which justify a happy state of complacency. My own country is no exception in this overall picture. However, there are also reasons to be somewhat optimistic in our collective fight against all forms of intolerance as they illustrate that we might be making inroads into this phenomenon. Some relief is the following:

Firstly, participating States recognize the fact that manifestations of hatred and intolerance pose a serious threat not only to the security of individuals, but also to democracy, societal cohesion, enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms and ultimately to the security and stability at the national and global levels. Therefore, **we recommend that the participating States continue to unanimously and unequivocally reaffirm their political will and rededicate themselves to accelerate their efforts to develop an effective response for countering these phenomena.**

Secondly, there is a growing awareness that without reliable data and analysis on the hate and intolerance-motivated incidents it is not possible to chart a course in the way of devising effective policies to respond to the trends in manifestations of hate. We commend the ODIHR for implementing its tasking for collecting information and statistics and reporting them to the HDIM. The 2006 Hate Crimes report will be an important resource document when we formulate our priorities for the future. **We recommend that the ODIHR should strengthen the early warning aspect of the report by making available data on serious incidents in a prompter fashion where time becomes a critical factor.**

For participating States, including my own, non-recording and non-reporting of incidents remains a problem. In this regard, **we recommend that the participating States should train law enforcement officers and strengthen cooperation with civil society representatives in monitoring and reporting on hate-motivated incidents and crimes.** However, racial profiling by the law enforcement authorities among its other consequences undermines the credibility and accuracy of data. Inappropriate use of an individual's racial characteristics in identifying criminal suspects severely affects Muslim communities and reinforces their sense of stigmatization and exclusion.

Thirdly, awareness of the societal ills is prompting governments and civil society to launch projects to inspire and generate good practices both at the national and international levels in promoting mutual respect and understanding as well as intercultural dialogue. In the league of such projects, the Alliance of Civilizations of the UN is one in which the OSCE is a partner. This initiative seeks to forge collective political will and mobilize concerted action at the institutional and civil society levels to overcome prejudices, misperceptions and polarization. **We recommend that the OSCE should actively participate in the First Forum meeting of the Alliance next January in Madrid and share its experience.**

Fourthly, the role of education and media has been recognized in overcoming prejudices and promoting mutual respect and understanding. In the realm of the media, there is now a broad measure of agreement that freedoms must be exercised with responsibility. We also hear more about complementarity between freedom of expression, freedom of religion and non-discrimination as well as the limitations that accompany the exercise of rights and freedoms, carefully formulated in the pertinent international instruments.

The fact that tolerance and intolerance are not genetic by-products of our human nature but a result of a learning process should encourage us all to invest more in the field of education. **We should also recognize the importance of teaching about religions and beliefs as part of tolerance education.** We commend ODIHR for preparing a much needed reference document on “Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools”.

Finally, there is also a tendency to acknowledge that the fight against intolerance has to be a collective endeavor of different communities. Communities increasingly recognize that although their experiences of different forms of intolerance are unique, common underlying motives and strategies for an effective response can foster solidarity among them. **We recommend that participating States as well as the OSCE institutions and structures, including the three Personal representatives should support intercommunal projects and joint initiatives in fighting intolerance and discrimination.**

I save the issues related to public and political discourse for an intervention in the afternoon session.

Mr. Moderator,

The international community today faces formidable challenges in tackling acts and manifestations of racism and xenophobia and in particular various forms of religious intolerance. A new international solidarity needs to be fostered and mobilized through concrete actions and projects that unite people. OSCE, with its comprehensive approach to security, can play the role of unifying denominations, a focal point for a clearing house of data and possibly an integrating framework.

Lastly, I would like to announce that a side event on “Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims” sponsored graciously by the ODIHR and consequently supported by us will take place in the Plenary Hall at 13.15. We believe it is a well appointed theme to follow the present session and an input to the forthcoming Chairmanship Conference in Cordoba in October. I encourage widest possible participation and an interactive process at the event.

Thank you.