



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR TACAN İLDEM
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF TURKEY
In response to the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe,
Mr. Nils Muižnieks
(985th Meeting of the Permanent Council, 27 February 2014)**

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.

I join the previous speakers in warmly welcoming Commissioner Muižnieks to the Permanent Council for the first time. We thank him for his thought-provoking presentation, in which he touched upon a number of important issues.

If we are to successfully overcome the challenges we face in our overlapping geographies, we must certainly strengthen the dialogue and institutionalized cooperation between the two organizations, while respecting the distinct roles they play and the added value they provide. Needless to say, we attach importance to all four areas of enhanced OSCE-Council of Europe cooperation. On this occasion I would like to restrict my remarks by dwelling on one of those areas in particular, knowing that those points that the Commissioner raised in relation to my country are being discussed in detail with our delegation in Strasbourg.

Turkey has long been at the forefront of efforts to promote tolerance and non-discrimination within both the OSCE and the Council of Europe. Indeed, today more than ever before, the rise of racism, xenophobia, intolerance and discrimination is among the foremost challenges facing both organizations. Inextricably interwoven with these phenomena is of course the increase in intolerance and discrimination against those perceived to be “other” or “different”, particularly migrants, in many participating States.

A large number of people still fall victim to intolerance and discrimination on a regular basis in the countries they have made their homes. In recent years the economic crisis has fanned the already existing negative feelings even more strongly towards migrants. Muslims have been particularly hard hit as Islamophobia continues to flourish, feeding off the increasing general levels of extremism and xenophobia.

Mr. Chairperson,

Against this backdrop, my country maintains its determination to mobilize, as effectively as possible, the resources of the OSCE in combating these scourges. And we are pleased to observe that you, Mr. Commissioner, continue to be actively engaged against intolerance and discrimination within the framework of the Council of Europe.

In July 2012 you issued a call against anti-Muslim prejudice, emphasizing how it reinforces social exclusion and hinders the integration of Muslims in European societies. You urged governments to stop targeting Muslims through legislation or policy and to combat popular prejudice and intolerance against them. In December 2012 you drew attention to the negative impact of the rise of anti-migrant discourse on the work of those who defend migrants' rights, and stressed that intimidation and attacks on such persons are unacceptable. In May 2013 you expressed your concern about the intensification of the activities of racist extremist organizations, including political parties, in Europe. You insightfully pointed out that such organizations invent "enemies" to be fought and eliminated. You underlined that racist violence, as opposed to other forms of violence, has a broader destructive impact on human dignity and social cohesion, and should therefore be treated more seriously.

We couldn't agree more, Mr. Commissioner. In your person the OSCE has a staunch ally within the Council of Europe for the protection and promotion of human rights in general, and the fight against intolerance and discrimination in particular. Turkey appreciates your work.

In concluding, let me thank Commissioner Muižnieks once again for his contributions to the continuing cooperation between our Organizations, and wish him every success in his future endeavors.

Thank you.