

**SUPPLEMENTARY HUMAN DIMENSION MEETING**

**HATE CRIMES –**

**EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGISLATION**

**Opening remarks by Ambassador Janez Lenarčič**  
Director of the Office for  
Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Vienna, 4 May 2009



Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

A warm welcome to you all to this Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting, on “*Hate Crimes – Effective Implementation of Legislation*”. Welcome especially the participation of OSCE institutions and field missions, our partner international organisations and a significant number of civil society representatives who have had a productive roundtable this morning. We will hear a report from this side event shortly.

At the outset, I would like to extend my appreciation to the Greek OSCE Chairmanship and participating States for having chosen this important topic for a supplementary meeting.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

The participating States of the OSCE have repeatedly reaffirmed their commitment to combat crimes motivated by racism, xenophobia, and other forms of intolerance – broadly known as hate crimes. It is fair to say that the OSCE community has led the way by adopting international commitments in this field which reflect the knowledge that hate crimes, if not addressed properly, have the potential to escalate into wider scale violence, endangering social cohesion and affecting the security of individuals and communities.

But while there are many important commitments, the true test is whether this leads to results on the ground. In times of crisis, minorities and vulnerable groups tend to become scapegoats for all the ills of society. We can see an increase in openly-expressed hostility to minorities, and at the same time, reports of increasing numbers of hate crimes. Even where this hostility does not translate into violence, many minority communities say they feel fearful and vulnerable. An open and vigorous response to hate crimes can help reduce this.

The ODIHR publishes an *Annual Report on Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region*, providing insight into the hate crimes phenomenon. From this, we can see that although the victims may differ, the level of violence may vary, and the number of crimes may fluctuate, one thing remains constant: Hate crimes happen across the OSCE region. States which are able to accept that such crimes have occurred are best placed to successfully tackle the problem. They can, to achieve this aim, take advantage of the assistance we provide.

We have, in this context, recently launched a publication entitled *Hate Crime Laws: A Practical Guide*, which provides practical advice for lawmakers, campaigners and law enforcement personnel involved in developing or implementing hate crime legislation.

But this Meeting focuses on effective implementation of hate crime laws. This means thorough investigation, vigorous prosecution and the use of tough sanctions where a case is proven to be a hate crime. For this to happen, law enforcement officers must be able to identify hate

crimes, and understand the special challenges posed by these cases. The ODIHR's *Law Enforcement Officer Programme on Combating Hate Crimes* focuses on the practical questions hate crime investigations throw up for law enforcement officers. And we have been delivering this programme for many years now, working intensively with national trainers to develop curricula for police academies on hate crimes. A similar training directed at prosecutors is under development, and a training curriculum for civil society on hate crimes has already been implemented. These tools are part of ODIHR's efforts to support States to combat the scourge of hate crime.

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Ladies and gentlemen,

This meeting is a chance to deepen our understanding, and improve our responses to this phenomenon. It is an opportunity to highlight and discuss common challenges, to ask ourselves how we can react more effectively, and to find ideas as to how maximize our limited resources. We can learn about strategies which have been tried, those which worked and, just as importantly, those which didn't. We can measure both how far we have come, and how far we have yet to go.

I am looking forward to a fruitful and enlightening discussion and thank you for your attention.

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It is now my pleasure to introduce the keynote speaker of this SHDM, Professor Lawrence, who is the Dean at George Washington Law School, and one of the leading experts on hate crimes. His presentation will set the scene for the discussions over the next two days. Professor Lawrence, you have the floor.