

Delegation of the Netherlands  
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DRAFT – Check against delivery

1. This OSCE Conference on anti-Semitism here in Berlin is an important event because it focuses on one of the key challenges in the OSCE human dimension area: combating anti-Semitism, as part of the wider efforts against racism, xenophobia and intolerance. As such it builds on the first OSCE Conference on anti-Semitism last June under the Netherlands Chairmanship.
2. My delegation fully associates itself with the statement made by the Irish Foreign Minister on behalf of the European Union. This Conference is indeed an important occasion to reaffirm our basic values and to renew our public condemnation of the evil of anti-Semitism in all its manifestations.
3. This Conference is also important because anti-Semitism has increased in Europe in recent years. In the Netherlands the increase has been particularly striking in the form of anti-Semitic expressions on the Internet, but the occurrence of other incidents, like physical assaults and verbal abuse, is also on the rise. Reliable information exists of Jews being verbally abused or pestered in schools and some neighborhoods.
4. What causes this rise in intolerance? There is not one simple cause. One factor is that the memory of the atrocities committed in World War II is receding in public memory. It is clear that disadvantaged groups again seem to be susceptible to believing hate speech against Jews, especially when it appears in some of its viciously subtle forms. The Internet is an easy source of this kind of hate-speech. About 90% of all reported anti-Semitic expressions were found on Muslim web sites. Young immigrants, mainly of North African descent are one source of anti-Semitism. Discontent with political developments in the Middle East is probably fuelling anti-Semitic attitudes. In 2002 this became clear when the intensity of such incidents went up considerably in the period of the Israeli actions around the city of Jenin: operation Defensive Shield. In reporting about Middle East politics some satellite broadcasts from certain Arab countries fuel the misconception that all Jews support the state of Israel no matter what it does. Generalizing discontent with policies of the state of Israel to extend to all Jews no matter where they live, becomes anti-Semitism, especially if it is unsavorily linked to prejudices about Jews.
5. The existence of anti-Semitic feelings amongst immigrants has long been ignored. After all, such immigrants are often themselves the object of discrimination. Post September 11 such discrimination has increased, in the Netherlands at least as much as the rise in anti-Semitic incidents. However, one form of discrimination doesn't condone another. On the contrary, all such forms of discrimination need to be countered.
6. In all of this it is important not to make sweeping generalizations. It is important to point out that most serious cases of anti-Semitism prosecuted in the Netherlands have

not been committed by minority groups. Less than half of the 2002 data regarding anti-Semitism registered by the police, showing a marked increase from 18 in 2001 to 46 in 2002<sup>1</sup>, point to a relationship with the violence between Israel and the Palestinians and/or groups of Middle East immigrants.

7. What can we do about such worrisome trends? The title of this session is “the Role of Governments and Civil Society in Promoting Tolerance”. Government policies to combat anti-Semitism can only be successful when they try to involve civil society in all aspects of the policy making process. From monitoring what actually happens in society to designing policies and implementing them, civil society plays a crucial role in any policy to combat anti-Semitism. In the Netherlands cooperation with civil society organisations as described above is a crucial element in our activities. The Government maintains active contacts with Jewish organizations, but also with other organisations working towards combating racism and intolerance, some of which are represented here in Berlin.
8. Indeed for the Netherlands combating anti-Semitism is an important part of our wider policies to combat discrimination and to promote tolerance and it has a prominent place in our national action plan to combat racism. Last December the Netherlands Government presented this Action Plan to Parliament. Its formulation, in conformity with the conclusions reached in Durban in 2001, has been a joint effort in which Government bodies, Public Prosecutors and the police have worked closely together with anti-racism organisations, NGOs, the business sector, trade unions, ethnic minority groups and other parts of civil society.
9. I would like to highlight some elements of the national action plan:
  - Awareness raising campaigns (for example: “P.O.Box 51” media campaigns to promote tolerance), material for schools, subsidies for organizations and/or events that promote tolerance, for example around liberation day and the national commemoration of the end of the Second World War (4 and 5 May)
  - Monitoring: Next to the Government bodies to monitor discrimination, the Government sponsors several civil society organisations to follow the relevant developments. A one-time subsidy has been given to strengthen co-operation between the different NGOs concerned.
  - In the course of 2004 greater uniformity will have been reached in registering complaints, both by Government bodies (police, Public Prosecutions Department), as well as the different private organisations.
  - Strengthening legal procedures and support to victims. While combating anti-Semitism and other forms of racism is not only a matter of legal procedures, a need was felt to increase penalties for structural discrimination. Legislation has been adopted recently by Parliament.
10. Let me close with a word of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: “The only thing we should not be tolerant about is intolerance”.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the registration of the Public Prosecutions Department (LECD) the increase was from 41 to 60, with only 5 by ethnic minority groups.