



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

WORKING SESSION 13:
– COMBATING RACISM, XENOPHOBIA, AND DISCRIMINATION
– COMBATING ANTI-SEMITISM AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIANS,
MUSLIMS AND MEMBERS OF OTHER RELIGIONS

Delivered by Ambassador Jostein Leiro, Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or
Belief, at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM)
Warsaw, 24 September 2019

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Regrettably, we continue to witness in our region incidents of hate speech, harassment of, and attacks on various religious and other minorities. Our history has amply demonstrated the many negative impacts of such activities, including the most dramatic consequences for our peace and security. We must neither allow these forces of prejudice, intolerance and discrimination to define our societies, nor to limit the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief of our citizens.

We call on all participating states, and other stakeholders, to strengthen their efforts to counter intolerance, prejudice and discrimination. We need to redouble our efforts to further and respect the commitments we as states have undertaken to protect the human rights of our citizens. More specifically, I would put forward the following recommendations:

- For participating States to increase their efforts to support greater awareness of the dangers of hate speech and expressions of xenophobia, racism and intolerance – be it in the form of hatred based on gender, ethnicity, religion or

belief, disability or sexual orientation. Awareness campaigns, the creation of dialogue fora, as well as training of teachers and education material are some of the practical tools.

- For States closely to monitor intolerance, discrimination and prejudice based on religion or belief, including anti-Semitic, anti-Islamic and all other discriminatory attitudes, and, when publicly expressed, to address them firmly in accordance with OSCE and other human rights commitments.
- To draw on ODIHR's expertise in implementing measures to counter these negative forces, including through training of law enforcement, prosecution and the judiciary in rights-compliant responses to hate crime. In this regard, the existing guidelines, most recently the new ODIHR Policy Guidance on Freedom of religion or Belief and Security, should serve as valuable guides.

In Norway, the Action Plan against anti-Semitism adopted in 2016 has a particular emphasis on prevention and education. Surveys show a decrease of anti-Semitic prejudices in Norway over the last years. Based on the positive experiences of engaging all positive forces to meet these serious challenges, the Government has recently decided to prepare an action plan against discrimination against muslims, and, further, is preparing a broader action plan against racism and discrimination based on ethnicity and religion.

We look forward to continuing to work with the executive structures of the OSCE, not least with the ODIHR, in these endeavours. We will also work with the OSCE and participating States to prevent expressions of intolerance, discrimination and prejudice from threatening the human rights of our citizens or the peace and security of our region.