

Closing Remarks

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OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting

on

*'Prevention of Racism, Xenophobia, and Hate Crimes Through
Educational and Awareness-Raising Initiatives'*

Hofburg, Vienna
11 November, 2011

Check against delivery!

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The rapporteurs gave a good summary of the working sessions, so let me take this opportunity during the closing session to highlight a number of themes that arose during this event and present a forward-looking perspective based on these discussions here.

Firstly, I would like to recall the moving testimony of our keynote speaker, Ms. Doreen Lawrence, who provided us an insight into the devastating **impact that hate crimes have on families and communities**. Her almost 20 year quest for justice continues with the retrial of two of the suspects on Monday, and I would like to thank her for her participation here at a particularly testing time for her. Her contribution helped to set the tone for this SHDM and to focus our attention on how to combat and prevent hate crimes such as the one she suffered with the death of her son in 1993.

Testimonies like this one are essential as we witness a resurgence of racism and xenophobia in places where we thought the problem 'had been dealt with'. Racism, I am afraid, cannot 'be dealt with' and eradicated. It needs to be tackled continuously, from one generation to the next, and this is something that we need to watch attentively.

It was encouraging to hear **about the various initiatives implemented by state authorities which include awareness raising programmes**, stronger penalties for perpetrators, innovative collaborations and involvement of NGOs, various educational programmes and the role of the media in prevention of racism, xenophobia and hate crimes. And I repeat: we need **political leaders** who speak out whenever the need arises.

Additionally, some of you presented accounts of your personal experiences where you have suffered racist attacks, both physically and verbally, and this serves as timely reminder that we cannot and **must not become complacent**. There is still much to do and we need to continue with our efforts to confront racism and xenophobia.

The **role of the media** is crucial. Racist and xenophobic views and opinions are now being shared via mobile telephones, Blackberry, and Twitter which makes it more difficult to monitor and report on instances of hateful speech. This is a particularly complex challenge that must be addressed with sensitivity, and always accounting for human rights law that requires us to carefully balance our concerns with regard to intolerant speech and the need to protect freedom of speech.

Also, we need to take advantage of upcoming public events like the **Euro 2012 and the Olympics** to raise awareness about racism, xenophobia and hate crimes. It is reassuring to see that the Union of

European Football Associations is taking a lead through providing support to local initiatives that engage wider society about racism and xenophobia. This leadership needs to be acknowledged and supported.

ODIHR is ready to collaborate with domestic Football Associations, law enforcement, schools, communities, and NGOs to combat manifestations of racism and xenophobia in their local contexts.

Finally, let me stress that the **roundtable** for People of African Descent yesterday was an engaging event as it produced a number of recommendations in the fields of education and access to justice. Our Office will follow-up on these recommendations in due course.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank you all for your involvement during this SHDM and your continued commitment to addressing racism and xenophobia. ODIHR remains committed to contributing its expertise in this regard and we look forward to working with you all in the near future.

Thank you and have a safe travel back.