

**Talking Points of the OSCE Secretary General on  
“Combating xenophobia through fostering inclusive dialogue”**

**Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Friends of the  
UN Alliance of Civilisations**

*New York, 23 September 2016*

High Representative Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

- As today’s unprecedented flows of refugees and migrants put pressure on receiving societies, newcomers are increasingly met with hostility, intolerance and even violence.
- Nurtured by fear and fanned by populism and hate speech, xenophobia contradicts and challenges the basic principles of human dignity and equality, which underpin the peaceful coexistence of peoples and nations.
- But not only human rights are at stake: xenophobia also endangers stability and security. As viewpoints become more polarized, the validity of multicultural societies is coming into question, threatening to undermine the social fabric in many countries and regions.
- So we must join forces to create a paradigm shift in the current migration debate. We need to move away from the defensive and alarmist tone that predominate today and reframe the debate with a different narrative that on the one hand recognizes and addresses the root causes of displacement, and on the other promotes tolerance for diversity. We must focus on what unites us rather than what divides us, and spread the message that diverse societies are also strong and resilient societies that benefit all their members.
- An effective strategy to counter xenophobia and bias-motivated violence should be comprehensive and firmly based on knowledge and facts. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe produces the largest international compilation of hate crime data, reporting annually on hate crimes in its 57 members. It advises and supports governments and civil society groups in implementing programmes to combat intolerance – for

example through capacity-building programmes for law enforcement officers and prosecutors.

- Fostering open and inclusive dialogue, and creating partnerships for joint action to promote peace and security. And we are increasingly using our traditional strengths to foster inclusive societies by building broad and flexible coalitions with key stakeholders, including civil society, academia, the media, business and philanthropy, as well as governments at all levels and other international and regional organizations.
- We try to connect and support like-minded individuals and groups who work to advance dialogue and mutual understanding. Inclusiveness is key, so we engage young people, women, religious leaders, educators, artists and community leaders. We also recognize that the media, and in particular social media, can play a critical role in spreading messages of tolerance and acceptance.
- Over the years, the OSCE and the UN Alliance of Civilizations have forged a solid relationship rooted in shared values and common goals. Confronting xenophobia and other forms of intolerance in a co-ordinated and mutually reinforcing fashion calls for closer and stronger co-operation among all actors. In this spirit, the OSCE looks forward to building an ever-stronger partnership with the Alliance.

I thank you.