

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Warsaw September 24, 2019 Working Session 13

Tolerance and non-discrimination II including: Combating racism, xenophobia, and discrimination

Statement by Ms. Lilit Grigoryan, Head of the OSCE and Conventional Arms Control Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia

Madame Moderator,

The intolerance and xenophobia violate human dignity, create an image of an enemy within the society. Hate crimes on ethnic and religious grounds, especially when promoted at state level constitute serious security threat. From the bitter experience of our history we know that this can result in hate driven crimes, and even crimes against humanity.

We are facing an alarming situation in our region, when racist and xenophobic public discourse and open encouragement of hate crimes is a state policy of the political leadership of Azerbaijan.

I would like to refer to the alarming trend of misuse of education system by Azerbaijan to marginalize certain ethnic and religious groups. Target group of such policy are children and youth, which are deprived from alternative views, thus becoming vulnerable to radicalization. Misinterpreting own history and re-writing the history of others, eliminating references to cultural and spiritual heritage of other nations has become a common and extremely worrying practice. Unfortunately, the implications of such a policy can be long term and eventually prevent the reconciliation processes.

Madame Moderator,

Only free and democratic societies can promote values of peace, mutual respect and reconciliation. The existence of independent civil society and free media is extremely important prerequisite for preventing intolerance, and racism that may lead to violence.

We would like to recommend the ODIHR to assess the school educational materials against the content promoting exclusion and marginalization of specific ethnic and religious groups.

Thank you.