

**Cordoba Conference on Anti-Semitism and on  
Other forms of Intolerance**

ENGLISH only

**Norwegian Delegation**

**Statement by State Secretary Bjørn Haugstad**

**Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research**

**8 June 2005**

**Mr Chairman,**

Discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity or belief is a ghost from the past, which still is haunting us in very real and tangible ways. If you allow me to say so, this conference should have been irrelevant. Unfortunately it is not. Despite the terrible events that took place in Europe some 60 years ago, the OSCE again finds it necessary to discuss the problem of rising intolerance.

We must learn from the past to ensure that the Holocaust – the most extreme form of intolerance and the most heinous crime the world has ever witnessed – is never repeated. New generations must be aware of what happened 60 years ago. We must ensure that our schools tell the Holocaust story, horrible as it is.

We need inspiration, but we also need action. Two years ago the Norwegian Government issued a new Plan of Action to combat racism and discrimination. Our legislation needed revision to strengthen the legal protection against discrimination. I am therefore pleased to announce that last week a new Act prohibiting discrimination based on ethnicity, national origin, descent, colour, language and religious beliefs was adopted. The International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Racial Discrimination will become part of Norwegian law.

Consequently, both direct and indirect discrimination and all forms of harassment will be prohibited. The Act will apply to all areas of society, and will introduce efficient civil sanctions and the principle of a shared burden of proof.

We have to monitor racism, xenophobia and intolerance. The Norwegian Government will therefore establish a new ombudsman institution in 2006. This ombudsman will be responsible for enforcing the new Act on ethnic discrimination.

**Mr Chairman,**

We must start with education and the coming generation. Teaching of Holocaust and the prevention of racism is mandatory in Norwegian schools, and this is made clear in the National Curriculum. The introduction of a Holocaust Memorial Day in Norwegian schools from 2003 is one of the measures in the Plan of Action to combat racism and discrimination. Each year one school is awarded a special prize on that day. The prize is called the Benjamin Prize after a 15 year old boy – coloured – who was killed by Neo-Nazis on that day five years ago.

In 2001 Norway established the Centre for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities. It is a national institution for research, documentation, information and education. The Centre will be a meeting place for all who wish to participate in discussions on religious, racist and ethnically-motivated repression.

It is our belief and hope that the centre will spur interreligious dialogue in general.

**Mr Chairman,**

OSCE conferences like those in Berlin, Paris and Brussels, and indeed this here in Cordoba, increase awareness and promote appropriate action. It is now time to look ahead and agree on how we can best implement our commitments. In this respect we welcomed the appointment of the OSCE special representatives and their efforts to translate words into action. Their efforts should be coordinated with ODIHR, and we welcome the strengthening of ODIHR's efforts to promote tolerance.

Finally, let me thank the Spanish Government for taking the initiative for this conference and for their warm hospitality. Let me also thank the Slovenian Chairmanship for its part in the preparations. I can assure you of Norway's continued support in our common efforts to promote tolerance and combat all forms of discrimination.

Thank you.