



PORTUGAL 2007

Portugal 2007- Presidency of the European Union



PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF PORTUGAL
TO THE OSCE

HDIM.DEL/70/07
25 September 2007

OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING 2007

EU Statement for the Working Sessions 2 and 3: Combating Intolerance and Discrimination and Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding – Implementation of Commitments

25th September, Warsaw

Mr. Chairman,

The European Union values the work of the OSCE in promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, fighting prejudice and promoting equality.

Member States of the European Union take their international commitments on tolerance and non-discrimination seriously. EU directives require all Member States to introduce legislation against discrimination on grounds of race, sex, age, sexual orientation, disability and religion or belief. More recently the EU has agreed a Framework Decision on racism and xenophobia, which requires all Member States to ensure that their laws prohibit and punish incitement to racial hatred and violence, and impose stronger penalties for racially motivated violence.

OSCE conferences in Vienna, Berlin, Brussels, Paris, Cordoba and Bucharest set a clear political agenda for our common fight against all forms discrimination and intolerance.

Participating States of the OSCE have entered into a raft of commitments as a result of these excellent conferences. We must now turn our energy to implementation. We urge all participating States to concentrate their efforts in this direction.

ODIHR's excellent report - Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region: Incidents and Responses - makes depressing reading and further underlines the need for action to implement the promises we have made to each other, and to our populations.

The OSCE has developed a tailored response to various forms of discrimination. While there is no uniform method to counter all forms of intolerance, we must make clear that there is no difference in importance between them. All forms of intolerance must be challenged. There can be no suggestion of a hierarchy of hatreds.

The OSCE must maintain a consistent and comprehensive approach, dealing with all forms of intolerance in the most appropriate manner.

The European Union looks forward to the OSCE Chairmanship Conference on Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in Cordoba next month. This is the first such conference dedicated to this topic and we are keen to ensure its success. We urge all participating States to send strong and representative delegations to this conference. We hope that this conference will look broadly at this important and sensitive topic, considering not just manifestations of intolerance, but also approaches to integration, forming partnerships between civil society and Governments, and promoting mutual respect and understanding.

The EU remains appalled that consenting relationships between adults of the same sex are deemed criminal in two OSCE participating States. The EU also deplores the fact that discrimination, harassment and violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people exists across the region. We call on all participating States to protect the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people without discrimination, including their right to organise and campaign free of intimidation, and we call on the relevant OSCE structures to pay close attention to breaches of such rights.

Governments and law enforcement authorities need information on hate crime in order to formulate effective policy responses. They are working in the dark if they do not have adequate procedures to collect data on incidents and crimes motivated by hate. We recognise the need to improve our data collection within the EU and urge other states to do likewise. The recent establishment of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, by

extending the mandate of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, is a step in the right direction.

We applaud the work undertaken by ODIHR on education and awareness raising. In this context, we urge participating States that have not already done so to join the Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, and to implement the provisions of the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust.

The Bucharest Declaration from the OSCE Conference on Combating Discrimination, Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding, acknowledged the essential role that national parliaments play in enacting legislation and serving as a forum for national debate. Participating States have recognised the importance of government and elected officials responding to acts of intolerance and discrimination. The EU encourages the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly also to show leadership on these issues.

The EU supports the continuing work of the Chairmanship's Personal Representatives on tolerance issues. We look forward to the Chairmanship's review contributing towards strengthening the overall effort of the OSCE to combat intolerance and discrimination.

In conclusion, the EU reaffirms its determination to oppose and combat all forms of racism, discrimination and intolerance, wherever they occur. The OSCE remains an important vehicle - both politically and practically - in that endeavour.

The Candidate Countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia^{*}, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

^{*} Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.