

SUPPLEMENTARY HUMAN DIMENSION MEETING
HATE CRIMES –
EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGISLATION

Closing remarks by Ambassador Janez Lenarčič
Director of the Office for
Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Vienna, 5 May 2009



Ladies and Gentlemen,

I will not repeat the full content of each session, since you have heard the reports of the moderators, but I would like to simply highlight a few key points that were brought out of each discussion.

The first session, relating to legislation on hate crimes, was started with a thorough analysis of the legal framework in Latvia. The important point made in that presentation from Ms Brands Kehris was the legacy from the USSR which can still be seen in the current criminal code. This is an issue which can affect many OSCE states and it is important to understand that the concepts enshrined in such laws will interact in different ways when applied to hate crimes. This led to a discussion about the difference between hate crime, hate speech and discrimination. The need to ensure that these are kept separate was stressed by participants.

The second session, on policing and prosecuting hate crimes looked at the agencies which are in the front line of the process of

responding to hate crimes. It was a wide-ranging discussion covering issues such as

- specialized police units, examples of training programs and
- the need to work with civil society to help police and prosecutors better understand how their professional decisions affect the communities who are victims of hate crimes.

And then the third session moved into an area which is of increasing concern – how to deal with the special challenges posed by violent hate groups. These groups are known to recruit young, vulnerable people, and can spread their message easily through the internet, through music and fashion. The alarming thing for many is that they are hard to detect, and that they use extreme and brutal violence as part of their ideology. The introducers discussed the French gendarmerie specialist units and how they have developed techniques to investigate such groups. The difficulties that were

discussed included the cross-border activities, the need to be able to interpret the symbols and insignia used by hate groups.

The discussions at the meeting and at the civil society roundtable which preceded it has given much food for thought, and it should help inform policies of the participating States, and help OSCE develop its assistance programs.

So, I would like to thank all of you have attended over the last 2 days, and contributed your time, your knowledge and your suggestions for how we can improve the implementation of hate crime laws. I would like particularly to thank the introducers who have thoughtfully analyzed the issues for discussion and the moderators who have ensured that the discussions were free-flowing and relevant.

Finally, my thanks to the interpreters as well as the ODIHR team that worked hard to make this meeting a success.

With this, I am honored to bring this supplementary human dimension meeting to a close.