

**OSCE High-Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination  
Astana, June 29-30, 2010**

**“Discrimination and Security”**

**Prof. Dr. Mehmet AYDIN  
Minister of State  
Republic of Turkey**

Mr. Chairman,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin with a word of thanks to everyone who contributed to the preparation of this “OSCE High level Conference”. I would like also to take this opportunity to express my thanks to the Kazakh Chairmanship, the host of this conference.

Since this conference is entitled “Tolerance and Non-Discrimination” and since OSCE is primarily a multilateral “security” institution, I think it would be quite appropriate to make a few remarks on these two key terms: Discrimination and security.

We all know that discrimination has many root causes on which intense debates are going on at various levels, especially after the tragic events of 9/11. These are psychological, social, economic, political and cultural causes of intolerance and discrimination.

I would like to pick up the last cause, i.e. the cultural one and very briefly relate it to the issue of security.

Needless perhaps to say, *not culture* in the descriptive, i.e. anthropological or sociological sense is the cause of tension and conflict but *culturalism* in the normative, political and ideological sense has become the major cause of discrimination. It exists everywhere, but its Western version has become very influential not only in the streets but also in the decision-making circles. Culturalism claims a monopoly over shared values such as respect for human dignity, justice, rule of law and so on. It considers them uniquely western or uniquely Christian or Judeo-Christian. It describes Muslims and Islam itself in a very nasty way.

The current cultural predicament is not purely the result of prejudice against migrants. Existing research, says a recently published report prepared for Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly (2010), “finds that the level of prejudice against Muslims is greater than that towards immigrants.”

This predicament is dangerous not only in regard to non-discriminatory socio-political vision and practice but also in regard to a new concept of security with a cultural dimension. I

am glad to see that many multi-lateral institutions, progressive political leaders and opinion makers have now become aware of this problem. For example, the NATO, which is now functioning in the Muslim world as well, is trying to conceptualize what it calls “an enlightened concept of security” that takes the values of non-western cultures into account.

For a similar purpose the Council of Europe prepared an excellent “White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue.”

Cultural issues have become an important theme as far as the “Commitments of the OSCE” in general and its “comprehensive security concept” are concerned. This institution is always ready to contribute to culture-oriented programs and projects. I gratefully remember the fact that while the UN High-Level Group, of which I had the privilege to co-chair, was working hard to prepare the report of AoC initiative, both the OSCE Secretary General and the President spared a whole day to discuss with us the relevance of this important UN initiative.

President Obama insists (for example in his Ankara and Cairo speeches) on the urgent need of a “broader engagement” with the Muslim World in every field, including culture, while dealing with security issues in general and with the fight against terrorism in particular.

I sincerely hope that this awareness and vision will lead to more reasonable international relations and international politics. This will constitute an essential step forward toward creating a more tolerant peaceful and secure world.