



OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2008

Working Session 5: Tolerance and non-discrimination I (1th October 2008)

EU Statement

Mr. Chairperson,

The European Union reaffirms its dedication to the promotion of dialog, mutual respect and understanding in the OSCE region.

Tensions stemming from unresolved problems related to national minorities have the potential of destabilising security not only in single countries, but in entire regions. Therefore, whenever they appear, they must be addressed in an urgent manner and their root causes should be quickly identified and dealt with at the earliest possible moment. Education can play here a very important role.

People must learn to appreciate diversity and live together in harmony. In this respect the EU reiterates its readiness to work together with the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe in further development of integration programmes. Furthermore the EU supports intercultural initiatives and recalls that 2008 is the European year on intercultural dialog.

The EU commends the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Ambassador Knut Vollebaek for his invaluable work. In particular we would like to highlight the High Commissioner's recent efforts to support dialogue and co-operation concerning minority issues between the states of central asia. The EU also expects that the conference on the recommendations on national minorities in inter-state relations, organised by the office of High Commissioner and starting tomorrow in Bolzano-Bozen, as well as regional consultations on this topic planned to be held in the spring of 2009, will facilitate the exchange of views on the issue. The EU urges all OSCE states to continue to co-operate with the High Commissioner on matters related to national minorities and make use of his expertise and assistance.

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At the same time the EU expresses its appreciation for the dialogue regarding a number of different minority issues conducted by the High Commissioner with its own member states.

The EU is pleased with the outcome of the supplementary human dimension meeting on the role of national institutions against discrimination in combating racism and xenophobia with aspecial focus on persons belonging to national minorities and migrants held in Vienna at the end of may this year. The meeting enabled fruitful exchanges of experience and good practices which highlighted the usefulness of specialized bodies as tool to combat effectively all forms of discrimination, notably through assistance to the victims, independent monitoring and provision of policy advice.

The EU commends the contribution made by the OSCE institutions in the area of preventing and combating aggressive nationalism, racism and chauvinism. The work of ODIHR and OSCE field missions cannot be overestimated. Placing issues of aggressive nationalism, racism and chauvinism highly on the agenda of the OSCE's activities has helped to work out numerous commitments aimed at tackling those problems.

Now we must concentrate on practical implementation of those commitments. The HDIM offers us a great opportunity to see how much has been done and how much work is still ahead of us.

The EU draws OSCE participating states' attention to the fact that while striving to do one's best to fight instances and prevent the appearance of aggressive nationalism, racism and chauvinism, one must be careful not to label legitimate voices in society in such a way as to restrict their rights and freedoms unjustly.

Referring to the need for coherence and to avoid duplication in the work of international organisations, the EU welcome the existing cooperation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe. The EU encourages both organisations in all fields possible, especially regarding tolerance and non-discrimination. The European Union remains committed to play a leading role in promoting tolerance and non-discrimination in the OSCE area.

Thank you.

EU recommendations are circulated separately.

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and Serbia, the European

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Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area, Liechtenstein, 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

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