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**OSCE Conference on anti-Semitism
EU intervention in session 1:
Legislative, Institutional Mechanisms and Governmental Action,
including Law Enforcement**

The European Union believes that the use of legislation, supported by institutional mechanisms is crucial to combat racism, discrimination, xenophobia and anti-Semitism. The European Union has therefore been developing over the last few years a comprehensive and cohesive approach to tackling racism and anti-Semitism. This approach is centred around new legislative measures which establish minimum standards across the EU, establishing European and national level mechanisms to complement legislative initiatives, mainstreaming anti-racism across its programmes and activities and strengthening cooperation amongst its Member States.

By the end of 2003, all Member States of the European Union shall incorporate EU level Racial Equality and Employment Equality legislation into national legislation. The Racial Equality legislation focuses on racial or ethnic origin and covers a broad range of fields including employment, education and access to social services and benefits. The legislation against discrimination on grounds of religion or belief focuses on equal treatment in employment and occupation.

The EU law on Racial Equality also requires EU Member States to set up independent specialised equality bodies which will have the power to support victims of discrimination, conduct surveys or studies on discrimination and publish reports and deliver recommendations in the field of racial or ethnic discrimination.

In the field of criminal law, the EU has a Joint Action of 1996 to combat racism and xenophobia. The Action is to ensure effective legal cooperation between Member States in the area and to prevent perpetrators of racist and xenophobic offences from benefiting from different treatment in the Member States by moving from one country to another to avoid prosecution. It lists a number of racist and xenophobic behaviours as punishable as criminal offences. It also

refers to seizure and confiscation of racist and xenophobic material and exchange of information.

A new Proposal by the European Commission for a Council Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia is being discussed. It would further strengthen the Joint Action of 1996.

In addition, The European Union proclaimed the Charter of Fundamental Rights on 7 December 2000. The Charter aims to strengthen the protection of fundamental rights and make those rights more visible to the people residing within the EU. Article 1 guarantees the respect and protection of human dignity and article 21 prohibits discrimination based on any ground including colour, ethnic or social origin, language and religion or belief.

The Acceding Countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia and the Associated Countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey align themselves with this statement.