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**STATEMENT BY THE HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE OSCE AT THE
OSCE CONFERENCE ON ANTI-SEMITISM**

Vienna, 19-20 June 2003

Closing meeting

Mr. Chairman,

We have reached the concluding stage of our conference, which has been one of utmost importance for all OSCE participating States without exception and for the present and future generations of our peoples.

Many representatives both of participating States and of non-governmental organizations who have spoken before me have clearly defined what anti-Semitism actually is and why our Organization has included this issue on its agenda. That this has happened is due not least of all to the initiative shown by the United States of America in calling for this conference.

I have no desire here - before such a learned audience - to utter commonplaces and well-known truths. It is, after all, impossible to speak of the vile nature of anti-Semitism more forcefully and in more vivid terms than has already been done by the outstanding French writer Emil Zola or the Russian humanist and author Vladimir Korolenko. It is for that reason all the more painful to realize that these century-old prejudices belong not to our past, where anti-Semitism has its roots, but to our present.

Fortunately, State-sponsored anti-Semitism has today, in our view, been almost totally eradicated in the OSCE area. However, everyday anti-Semitism - for which, it is sometimes argued, there is ostensibly no one to blame - is regrettably no rare occurrence in our countries and is often perceived as something inevitable. But it is precisely this everyday anti-Semitism that feeds political extremism and radicalism; and it is this form of anti-Semitism that is handed down from one generation to the next, leading to a fatal perpetuation of personal and social inadequacy and intolerance.

We are convinced that the fight against anti-Semitism cannot be separated from the fight for human rights. How a State really sees the individual can be gauged by how vigorously it opposes all forms of anti-Semitism. This is why my country's Government is so very serious about this problem and is taking the necessary measures to counter any

manifestation of anti-Semitism in both legislation and law-enforcement practice. Much has been done and much remains to be done, but this is the basic policy of democratic Russia and its President, and we shall not swerve from this path.

During our conference, many speakers have raised the question as to what is the reason behind the tenacity of anti-Semitism, which would seem to have long ago been discredited. It is, for example, noteworthy that anti-Semitic attitudes grow stronger during critical periods of societal change, periods of conflict and economic upheaval, painful reforms and a progressive disintegration of the State, at which times anti-Semitism, as a specific form of xenophobia, takes on the role of a kind of social lightning conductor.

However paradoxical it may seem, there is today still a need to seek out an “enemy,” if even a mythical one. The unsophisticated assortment of so-called “enemies” is eternal and well known: Jews, gypsies, Muslims, Catholics, Protestants, migrants, “the enemy from without” and others. Although expressions of anti-Semitism among serious politicians and statesmen of OSCE participating States have long been regarded as unseemly, pandering to anti-Semitism and xenophobia is a fairly widespread occurrence. The use of any xenophobic clichés, most frequently in conjunction with ultra-patriotic slogans, is always an indicator of the authorities’ inability to respond to modern-day challenges in an appropriate and civilized manner.

We are united in our understanding of how the consequences of anti-Semitism ought to be dealt with. Scrupulous compliance with the law and the eradication of discrimination in every form is about all that can be proposed. In addition, education and culture in the broadest sense can unquestionably play an important role to this end. We are all well aware of the importance of Jewish culture to worldwide civilization. It would be difficult to name any country in the OSCE area whose culture has not been enriched by its Jewish citizens. We in Russia, for example, are proud of the substantial contribution that the Jewish people have made to the centuries-old and multi-ethnic Russian culture.

It is clear, however, that this is not enough if we are to overcome the dangerous social phenomenon of anti-Semitism. We are counting on this conference as well as the September meeting on the problems of xenophobia and racism - and also the OSCE’s heightened attention to any manifestations of intolerance and discrimination in general - to make it possible to move forward to a new level of co-operation between OSCE participating States in the search for answers to these difficult and so-called “eternal” questions. The discussions that have taken place here have shown that considerably greater and more effective use than heretofore must be made of the OSCE’s potential to combat anti-Semitism, all the more since this phenomenon is a real threat to the stable and harmonious development of civil society. The OSCE has much to do if it is to impart a fresh political impulse by co-ordinating the efforts of the participating States and various international organizations working to counter anti-Semitism, racism and xenophobia.

In conclusion, I should like to say that we have listened very attentively to both the positive assessments and critical comments contained in the statements of the representatives of the Russian non-governmental organizations. Even if we do not agree with a number of the critical comments that have been heard, we shall analyse with the greatest care all that has been said here and treat these comments with the utmost seriousness.

Our attention has also been drawn to a number of interesting initiatives put forward during the conference, including the eight specific proposals outlined in the statement by the head of the United States delegation, former mayor Rudolph Giuliani. In our view, they all merit the closest study.