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Portugal 2007- Presidency of the European Union



S. PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF PORTUGAL
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OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING 2007

EU Statement for the Working Session 1: Tolerance and non-discrimination

24th September, Warsaw

Mr. Moderator,

The need for combating and preventing aggressive nationalism, chauvinism, and ethnic cleansing is indisputable. In various OSCE documents the participating States have been reaffirming their determination to address these problems. The EU commends the ongoing efforts, which have already brought substantial results, advancing fair treatment of persons and groups, and encouraging freedom of choice and behaviour. In particular, the EU wishes to praise ODHIR, which has firmly established itself as a renowned institution in promoting tolerance and non-discrimination in the OSCE area. Also the significance of tolerance-related projects and programmes conducted by OSCE field missions cannot be overestimated. However, even though there are countries that have significant achievements in their fight against aggressive nationalism, chauvinism, and ethnic cleansing, this should not give rise to complacency. The EU would like to emphasise the need for further work and persistence. Preventing aggressive nationalism, chauvinism, and ethnic cleansing is not a one time task, which can be quickly done and forgotten about. Unfortunately, these phenomena have ability to reoccur and therefore they require our constant vigilance. The OSCE must continue to play a co-ordinating role in addressing these issues. Notwithstanding the need for continued dedication to tackling these problems, OSCE States must be careful not to label legitimate voices in society in such a way as to restrict their rights and freedoms unjustly.

The EU would like to underline again the importance of education as the most effective instrument in preventing the manifestations of aggressive nationalism and chauvinism,

which – if not contained – can lead to ethnic cleansings. Bringing up future generations in the spirit of tolerance, peaceful co-existence and acceptance for diversity is essential.

National minorities are another important topic of today's session. The EU is dedicated to promoting mutual respect and understanding within and between societies. Resolving problems related to national minorities should be seen as one of the key elements of maintaining security and stability in the OSCE region. The EU reiterates its readiness to work together with the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe in further development of minority and integration policies. At the same time we call for effective implementation of existing international standards regarding national minorities, in particular those ensuring their unrestrained access to public life and promoting freedoms of assembly, association and expression – this matter was discussed earlier this year during the Human Dimension Seminar on *Effective Participation and Representation in Democratic Societies*. The EU endorses the work of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and welcomes the recent appointment of Ambassador Knut Vollebaek to this vital position. We are confident that the outstanding work done by his predecessors will be continued and offer him our full support.

Thank you.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia, EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, 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.