

The Ongoing Battle Against Anti-Semitism

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Mr. Moderator, distinguished delegates:

Last week marked an important anniversary: Ten years since the outbreak of the second intifada in the Middle East and, subsequently, the start of a new wave of anti-Semitism throughout the OSCE region and around the world.

Since then, the OSCE has taken up the urgent struggle against rising anti-Semitism. High-level conferences in Vienna in 2003 and Berlin in 2004, as well as later conferences in Cordoba, Bucharest, and Astana, have focused a needed spotlight on this and other forms of intolerance.

The historic 2004 Berlin Declaration, which provided a series of important recommendations for governments to follow in combating anti-Semitism, specifically addressed the growing problem of anti-Semitic attacks being committed by opponents of Israel's policies. The passage stating that "international developments or political issues, including those in Israel or elsewhere in the Middle East, never justify anti-Semitism" stands as an important rebuke to those who try to justify hate crimes with politics.

Permanent Council Decision No. 607, which preceded the Berlin Conference, and Ministerial Decisions Nos. 12-04 and 10-05, which followed it, represent vital affirmations of the OSCE's commitment to fight anti-Semitism and related forms of racism and xenophobia. That commitment has been bolstered by the creation of ODIHR's indispensable tolerance and non-discrimination unit, which carries out this important work each day and which includes an expert advisor on anti-Semitism, and by the appointment of the Chairman-in-Office's three personal representatives on combating intolerance.

All of this has taken place since the last OSCE summit, which makes it imperative that the upcoming OSCE summit deal in a serious way with tolerance and non-discrimination issues and acknowledge that ODIHR's TND unit has now become a fixed and integral part of the OSCE's work.

While much has been done to fight anti-Semitism in the past decade, much work remains. The need for practical and effective strategies to combat and defeat this pathology is still crucial. To this end,

- The Ministerial Council should formalize the scheduling of conferences on anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance at regular intervals.
- We should widely promote, within the OSCE, the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency's comprehensive working definition of anti-Semitism.
- We must enhance the funding for ODIHR's TND unit so that it can sustain and expand its critical work, which includes educational programs on anti-Semitism in 14 countries.
- We must extend, for the foreseeable future, the terms of the three personal representatives on intolerance.
- Member-states must fulfill their reporting requirements with respect to hate crimes data. Fewer than 20 governments have done so until now.
- Finally, we must strongly reinforce the crucial principle declared at the Berlin Conference – That no political position, cause or grievance can ever justify anti-Semitism – and make clear that the demonization and delegitimization of the Jewish state is often none other than a pretext for the hatred of Jews themselves.