

DELEGATION OF TURKEY

**REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR YUSUF BULUÇ,
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**SIDE EVENT ON
“INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MUSLIMS AND EDUCATION”
(25 September 2007, Plenary Hall, OSCE HDIM, Warsaw)**

Thank you Mr. Moderator,

In my intervention earlier I have already underlined our growing concern with respect to acts that manifest intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in the OSCE geography. The frequency and regularity of news about incidents motivated by hate against Muslims have assumed depressing proportions. They are now being monitored and reported extensively by NGOs and international human rights bodies in a globalized world. The more data on anti-Muslim hate crimes and incidents become available, the deeper our understanding will become to measure the magnitude of the plight of Muslims facing discrimination and the risks that this phenomenon poses to the moral fabric of our societies and their harmony. I fear that what we know as of now may only be the tip of the iceberg.

Turkey in its part has been actively engaged in addressing and reversing the current political polarization and the perception of widening rift between the West and the Islamic World, not least within the OSCE. As for the proceedings of this session and hoping to contribute to the preparations of the Cordoba Conference to address intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, I would like to make the following recommendations and invite their discussion:

- There must be a debate whether the situation faced by the Muslims is best described by the term “Islamophobia”. An early opportunity for a discussion will be offered at the upcoming conference in Cordoba for which we are thankful to the Spanish Chairmanship.
- Participating States should collect and disseminate reliable data on hate crimes against Muslims. ODIHR should assist participating States upon their request.
- The Chairmanship of the OSCE should encourage and facilitate the establishment of a network of Muslim NGOs working in the fields of integration and anti-discrimination in the OSCE region within the context of the Cordoba Conference and the Youth Forum later this year.
- Muslim NGOs should be empowered to make their own cases both politically and legally, to campaign for their rights and to assist the victims. When professionally organized and backed by their communities, these civil society representatives can also become interlocutors to establish partnerships at the local and national levels.

- The NGOs representing the interests of the Muslim communities should work together with the NGOs of other vulnerable communities to foster solidarity and synergy in their activities and responses to hate incidents.
- The authorities of participating States should provide for more opportunities for dialogue and cooperation with the Muslim communities at both national and local levels recognizing ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity among them.
- Intolerant public discourse against Muslims and Islam should be countered by political leaders through responsible and constructive discourse.
- Media should be encouraged to provide more access to the Muslim communities to make their views and stories heard.

Thank you.