

NGO Preparatory Meeting For the Tolerance Implementation Meeting on Promoting Inter-Cultural, Inter-Religious and Inter- Ethnic Understanding

Almaty, 11 June 2006

Recommendations



On 12-13 June 2006, the Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe held a Tolerance Implementation Meeting on Promoting Inter-Cultural, Inter-Religious and Inter-Ethnic Understanding in Almaty, hosted by the Republic of Kazakhstan. The meeting was preceded by an NGO preparatory meeting on 11 June organized by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the OSCE. This preparatory meeting aimed at providing civil society representatives with the opportunity to exchange views and prepare recommendations for the participating States of the OSCE. This forum gathered about 150 representatives, from throughout the OSCE region, who discussed the role of civil society in inter cultural, inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue and who developed recommendations for the participating States as well as the OSCE institutions.

The recommendations were presented in a keynote speech during the opening plenary of the Tolerance Implementation Meeting by Ms. Ninel Fokina, Chair of the Almaty Helsinki Committee.

Introduction

- We are grateful for the efforts of the Chairmanship to have initiated a forum to prepare recommendations for the Tolerance Implementation Meeting;
- We thank the government of the Republic of Kazakhstan for hosting and supporting this event;
- We welcome the initiative of the Chairmanship to offer the opportunity to two Delegates of civil society to give keynote speeches, and in particular to present the conclusions and recommendations of the Preparatory Meeting to the Implementation Meeting and we recommend that this initiative be institutionalized in future OSCE conferences and meetings;

Areas of concern

- We remind the participating States of the OSCE to avoid double standards in assessing the human rights situation in participating States of the OSCE;
- We remind the participating States of their existing commitments to safeguard the right of freedom of religion or belief;
- We remind the participating States that the obligation to protect their citizens against terrorism does not justify curtailments of freedom of religion or belief, freedom of association, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech or other human rights;

Recommendations

- We recommend that dialogue initiatives emanating from civil society be acknowledged and supported by OSCE institutions and supported by the OSCE at a political level;
- We recommend that the OSCE engage more actively in supporting civil society in strengthening their dialogue with and relations to State authorities, in particular through establishing local, regional and national consultation mechanisms;
- We remind the participating States to adhere to their commitments to guarantee freedom of assembly and recommend that existing commitments be further elaborated. We recall that registration laws should provide for the offer

of legal personality and must never be a legal requirement (for those communities who choose not to register);

- We encourage the OSCE to facilitate the establishment of consultation mechanisms for ombudsmen and civil society in order to foster the exchange of information and the sharing of best practices in areas where such mechanisms are not currently in place;
- We recommend that participating States adopt and where necessary strengthen comprehensive antidiscrimination legislation and pursue antidiscrimination policies proactively;
- We recommend that the OSCE participating States strengthen the implementation of the body of commitments respecting the linguistic and cultural heritage of minorities in order to safeguard against discrimination on these grounds;
- We recommend that the OSCE participating States intensify efforts to implement programmes and support projects emanating from civil society aiming to promote equal opportunities and eradicate discrimination against Roma and Sinti especially in the CIS;
- We recognize that political representatives have a moral imperative and social responsibility to speak out against hate-motivated acts and incidents, and to avoid the use of intolerant and inflammatory statements which may incite prejudice, hatred or hostility against individuals or groups on the basis of race, ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation or disability;
- We recommend that the participating States and OSCE institutions foster an awareness by the media of their political, social, societal and ethical responsibility to prevent discriminatory and inflammatory public discourse;
- While recognizing specificities among different cultural, ethnic, religious and other communities, we recommend that the OSCE, in acknowledging the added value of coalition work, support the activities of existing networks fighting intolerance; and encourage the establishment and the development of regional coalitions (inter alia: inter-faith, inter-cultural and inter-ethnic) throughout the OSCE region;
- We recognize the need for the development of a database compiling illustrations of good practices on coalition building, highlighting successful examples of inter-cultural, inter-ethnic and inter-religious coalition projects aiming at increasing the level of trust between groups;
- We recommend that the participating States and the OSCE institutions acknowledge the specific asset of youth engaged in the fight against intolerance, encourage and facilitate its involvement in decision making process; build the capacity of youth organizations and leadership and seek close cooperation with the initiatives of the CoE;
- We recommend that the OSCE institutions facilitate the emergence of a youth forum on tolerance, non discrimination, mutual respect and understanding. Such a youth forum should be empowered to make recommendations on these issues;
- We recommend that the OSCE participating States strengthen their efforts to develop and promote a greater awareness and understanding of different religions through education and training programmes with the aim of safeguarding against discrimination on religious grounds;
- We recognize the existence of multiple identities as a wealth and as a catalysing force for cooperation and dialogue. We therefore recommend that

the OSCE participating States engage in education on ethnic diversity with the aim of safeguarding against political and societal discrimination.