

The speech by Ashot Ayrapetyan, from the Center for Interethnic Cooperation, at the morning plenary meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension, Warsaw, October 5, 2009

It takes more than just volunteer work to counter intolerance

Our organization, the Center for Interethnic Cooperation, has conducted seminars and trainings in 27 regions of Russia. We also organized study visits for representatives of the authorities, police and non-governmental organizations to the UK, Germany and Netherlands. Therefore we have been convinced that in regions where authorities actually do cooperate with non-governmental organizations the level of intolerance is much lower than in the regions where such work is not conducted at all or is only conducted nominally. I am sure that the same pattern is observed in the countries - members of the OSCE - where the state actually supports non-governmental organizations: there is less intolerance and violations of minority rights. Government structures are not able to effectively fight xenophobia and intolerance without the support from the society. Neither can non-governmental organizations cope with racism and xenophobia on their own, without the support from the authorities. It is time to understand that it takes more than just volunteer work to counter intolerance.

Our recommendations to the OSCE:

Determine what percentage of Britain's gross national income is used to support non-governmental organizations' projects, and encourage other countries - members of the OSCE to allocate appropriate funds for their non-governmental organizations. It would be also useful to examine the existing mechanism of grant giving to non-governmental organizations in the UK. Otherwise, the grants may reach only friends, colleagues or relatives of the grant providers.

The speeches of the official delegation and other non-governmental organizations from Russia can be found here.

http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2009/10/40323_ru.pdf

http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2009/10/40161_en.pdf

http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2009/10/40362_ru.pdf