

Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan

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Working session 7: Tolerance and non-discrimination I

Preventing aggressive nationalism, racism and chauvinism

Mr. Moderator,

Today, we are living at a time of heightened political, religious and ethnic awareness, which in certain instances takes on exaggerated forms and sometimes is maliciously exploited to fuel conflicts on ethnic, religious or cultural grounds. Such manifestations as aggressive nationalism, chauvinism, separatism and extremism are still hard realities in the OSCE area creating serious threats to maintaining international and regional peace and security.

Indeed, nationalistic ideologies stand often at the core of armed conflicts, military aggression, foreign occupation, hatred and intolerance involving the most serious international crimes. The use of nationalistic and xenophobic elements in political discourse is increasingly infecting political parties, civil society, youth and other segments, at the risk of legitimizing and trivializing this type of discourse. This type of discourse conveys prejudices and stereotypes in respect of neighbouring states and nations.

Nowadays, individual states exploit these manifestations as guiding tool for shaping their foreign and internal policies. Consequently, societies turn into hostages of such ideologies and ordinary citizens face syndrome of "besieged fortress". Propaganda of aggressive nationalism allows the Government concerned to draw the attention of its own public away from country's aggravating international isolation. Such policy seeks to advocate the culture of impunity and promote dangerous ideas of superiority and expansionism based on unconcealed ethnic and religious prejudices prevailing in individual country's policy and practice.

Unfortunately, there are vivid and bitter examples not only from past centuries' history but from the most recent period, when the head of one OSCE participating state publicly declared on "ethnic incompatibility" between two nations concerned. Condemnation of this outrageous declaration by European organizations, namely by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe was immediate saying that - quote - "recalling dark pages of European history will never be a good electoral strategy" - end of quote.

In this context one can easily understand why a search for durable peace, mutual respect and regional integration is failing, tolerance is lacking, and why people are not able to break stereotypes. We make these points because we need to recognize that this phenomenon undermines human values, ethnic diversity, peace building and respect of international law. This should mobilize our efforts in addressing effectively above-mentioned problems. And vigilance of the OSCE and its voice is strongly needed, now and in the future.

Thank you