

## **Statement by the delegation of Austria**

### **Working Session 13: Tolerance and non-discrimination II (continued): Combating racism, xenophobia, and discrimination; Combating anti-Semitism and discrimination against Christians, Muslims and members of other religions**

Thank you Madam Moderator,

Austria fully aligns herself with the statement delivered by France on behalf of the European Union and wishes to add some remarks in a national capacity.

Let me start with our recommendations:

- To the OSCE/ODIHR:

Continue to collect and disseminate good practice and positive examples of initiatives to foster tolerance and non-discrimination both at national and grass roots level with a view to strengthening our response to the existing challenges throughout the OSCE region

- Towards participating States:

Support adoption of the working definition for antisemitism employed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), for use within the OSCE.

Austria is firmly committed to the fight against racism and the prevention of intolerance and discrimination as enshrined inter alia in the UDHR, the ECHR and the Austrian constitution.

Schools are obliged to include the promotion of equality and the fight against racism and intolerance into their activities. The Austrian legal framework foresees that intercultural education is directed at all teachers and learners. As prevention work against radicalisation, racism and violence, school workshops have been and are still being held throughout Austria for schools of all types and levels. Subjects are phenomena such as hate speech on the Internet and the development of counter-strategies.

As part of the initiative ZUSAMMEN:ÖSTERREICH since 2011 close to 400 „Integration Ambassadors” – young persons with migration background acting as role models for children and young people - have been visiting schools and associations and reached some 60.000 young people. Under the motto "Reduce prejudices, create motivation" these integration ambassadors talk about their personal (integration) history and motivate pupils.

In order to enable victims of discrimination to seek remedies, a hotline against discrimination and intolerance has been operating since February 2015; by February 2019, around 688 people had contacted the hotline and been referred to contact persons/institutions which would enable them to claim their rights.

Let me also mention the role that the Austrian equal treatment body is playing in this regard, which has inter alia recently organized a workshop to strengthen effective actions to combat discrimination encountered by the Muslim population in various fields such as employment, housing or in public space.

Madam Moderator,

In its bilateral relations, Austria has fostered interreligious dialogue for more than three decades by actively engaging academics, experts, and religious leaders. Austria considers such dialogue to be an indispensable instrument to foster respect, cooperation and understanding among peoples and strengthening human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Therefore, contributing to global trust-building and peaceful co-existence through dialogue tools constitutes an essential part of Austrian foreign policy.

On the national level, the dialogue between the government and the legally recognised churches and religious communities in Austria is well-established and institutionalised, and has given rise, for example, to their right to give opinions on draft laws and regulations, and to close cooperation on matters of education or health.

Madam Moderator,

In view of its history, Austria is aware of its special responsibility in the fight against discrimination in general and antisemitism specifically and gives high priority to this fight both internally and at international level, including as an active member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

In 2018 the findings of an EU Fundamental Rights Agency survey showed that Antisemitism is not a curse of the past, but rather an immediate and growing threat in our world today. On average, in all 12 EU countries surveyed by the Agency, more than half of all respondents (56 %) worry that a family member or other people close to them would be harassed or insulted in the next 12 months because they are Jewish, with 50 % worrying about physical antisemitic attacks against their family members or close friends.

This study shows that the challenge of fighting Antisemitism is persistent and evolving. As witnesses and victims of the Holocaust are dying, the historical memory of the holocaust is fading. With new groups arriving in our societies, new forms and motivations of Antisemitism are taking shape, joining persisting “old forms” of Antisemitism. We need to understand all these trends, the various prejudices and manifestations, in order to be able to adopt and implement the right strategies and measures.

Besides awareness-raising, capacity-building and training of law enforcement officials, Austria has made better cooperation and trust between law enforcement authorities and Jewish communities a priority of its OSCE Chairmanship 2017. We have come a long way in building this trust and cooperation, which has eventually reached a very high level in Austria.

As EU Presidency in 2018, Austria further deepened this subject, with a major antisemitism conference on 21 November and the adoption of the Council Declaration on the fight against antisemitism and the development of a common security approach to better protect Jewish communities and institutions in Europe, inviting EU Member States to adopt and implement a holistic strategy to prevent and fight all forms of antisemitism and to increase their efforts to ensure security for Jewish communities, institutions and citizens. The adoption of the strategies at the national level and their presentation at EU level is currently foreseen during the second half of 2020, under the German EU Presidency.

Let me close by making reference to a recent incident in Austria. Last spring a number of pictures of Holocaust survivors displayed in a street exhibition entitled “Lest we forget” in central Vienna, have

been vandalised three times. These antisemitic acts have been condemned at the highest political level and were addressed at the IHRA Plenary Session in Luxemburg on 5 June 2019. Moreover, civil society has shown its solidarity by concrete reactions against these acts, including repairing the pictures and guarding the exhibition every night to prevent further attacks. This has received a lot of public support and constitutes a perfect example on how we need to confront antisemitism and other forms of racism and hate.