

**OSCE Conference on Tolerance and the Fight against Racism, Xenophobia
and Discrimination, Bruxelles, 13-14 September 2004**

**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Denmark to the OSCE,
H.E. Ambassador Kirsten Biering**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

While subscribing to the EU intervention, I would like to add some remarks on the situation in Denmark.

Protection against racism and discrimination constitutes a fundamental right for all persons, and Denmark has for many years had legislation and policies protecting against discrimination and promoting equal opportunities.

In recent years, Denmark has taken further steps to strengthen the protection against discrimination. Not only has EU legislation provided Denmark with an opportunity to reconsider and strengthen our existing legislation, but policies on equal opportunities also play an important role as part of the Danish Government's efforts to promote the participation of all persons irrespective of racial and ethnic origin in the life of society.

In July 2003, the Danish Parliament adopted new legislation prohibiting discrimination outside the labour market and in April 2004 the Danish Parliament strengthened the protection against discrimination on the labour market.

These legislative changes took place as part of the implementation of European Union Racial Equality Directive.

However, the Danish Parliament decided to go beyond what was required by the Directive. It was decided to give the Danish Institute for Human Rights the power to handle individual complaints from victims of discrimination both on and outside the labour market. All persons who have been victims of discrimination now have easy and free access to file a complaint and have their case evaluated.

The Government has also taken a number of non-legislative initiatives, among which I wish to highlight the Action Plan to Promote Equal treatment and combat racism, launched by the Government in November 2003. The Action Plan contains a number of new initiatives. For instance, the Government intends to launch a public information campaign concerning anti-discrimination and diversity. The media plays an enormous role in the debate on anti-discrimination. Therefore, the Government, in working with the media, wishes to highlight good examples of integration and diversity. The Government also intends to launch a survey to investigate why ethnic minority youth drop out of their studies and to what extent the drop-out rate is due to discrimination.

It is the opinion of the Danish Government that the fight against racism in particular must be based on examples of best practices. We must attract attention to these examples and the role models they provide.

In 2002 the Danish Ministry of Integration launched the campaign “All young people are needed”, which aims at increasing the level of education among young people of another ethnic background than Danish. Another aim is to tell the story of the many young people who complete an education and find employment. There have been meetings in a number of schools and educational institutions and an extensive information campaign has taken place. A corps of young role models from different lines of occupation has been established. Most recently, a campaign was launched to

entice more businesses to employ more trainees of another ethnic background. The Minister of Integration has personally contacted 12.500 businesses and an extensive set of guidance material to businesses and young people has been made public.

The Danish Government strongly believes that it is important for all key players in this field to share experiences - good as well as bad - in order to combat racism and promote tolerance and diversity. The OSCE and this Conference contribute to this goal in a very important fashion.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.