



United States Mission to the OSCE

Closing Statement

As delivered by Governor George Pataki
OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism and on Other Forms of Intolerance
June 9, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Fellow Delegates:

As we bring this conference to a conclusion, let me convey to the Chairman-in-Office and to the Spanish hosts the thanks of the United States delegation for organizing and making this conference happen.

I want to leave you with several thoughts about this conference. First, it was very productive for all of us to exchange views on the progress that has been made on these issues since the initial conference on anti-Semitism at Vienna in 2003. That conference prepared the groundwork for the Berlin Conference and the Berlin Declaration, as well as the Brussels Conference and Brussels Declaration. At Cordoba, we have had an opportunity to review what has been accomplished as a result of that declaration. The Cordoba declaration summarizes the efforts of the Participating States in those two years and suggests areas that we should emphasize for further attention and action in the coming months.

It is now time for all of our countries to take action on the proposals and ideas that have emerged from these three conferences. As President Gerald Ford said in 1975 when he signed the Helsinki accord, "History will judge this Conference not by what we say here today, but by what we do tomorrow – not only by the promises we make, but by the promises we keep."

Over the last two days, the United States delegation has offered a number of concrete best practices and recommendations to enhance implementation and promote more rigorous follow-ups. We have also taken note of the recommendations of other delegations and NGOs, who play an integral role in the struggle to promote tolerance and respect for diversity.

We have all given our speeches in the best prose we can muster, but there is more to combating anti-Semitism and intolerance than mere speeches. We now need to implement our commitments and take action on the proposals that have been made. Let me propose the following list of subjects on which we should all try to find ways to improve the records of our countries:

First, future conferences, if any, should focus on implementation, and should be at the expert level. Participating States should use every opportunity, such as those presented by Human Dimension Implementation meetings and Supplementary Human Dimension meetings, to review progress, gaps and next steps.

Second, the incoming Chairmanship in 2006 should reappoint the three Personal Representatives on tolerance under their existing titles. Once the ODIHR program is fully institutionalized, we envision that the representatives will no longer be needed. As this conference has clearly demonstrated, however, there remain serious gaps in implementation. The assistance of the Personal Representatives in raising awareness and spreading best practices will still be needed in 2006. Both the current and incoming Chairmanships should facilitate the independent work of the Personal Representatives.

Third, OSCE work on tolerance and non-discrimination must continue on the basis of the understanding that some forms of intolerance and discrimination have unique characteristics and origins and require a distinct focus in order to be properly addressed. Anti-Semitism – as the Chairman indicated - has a uniquely horrible history. As was evident from the outpouring of statements here in Cordoba, there is still much to be done in the field of combating anti-Semitism, a scourge with a unique and tragic history, the inexplicable recurrence of which in the 21st century is unacceptable.

Fourth, we also stress the importance of continuing the fight against discrimination towards Muslims, towards Christians and other religions. We urge participating States to ensure that all religious groups are able to practice their faiths freely, alone, or in community with others, through non-discriminatory laws, regulations, policies and practices.

Fifth, OSCE must continue to institutionalize its work in the fields of tolerance and non-discrimination, not only through ODIHR and every available institution, but also through the field missions. Moreover, states should make full use of the resources and assistance available through the outstanding ODIHR Tolerance Program.

Finally, political will is the essential ingredient for eliminating intolerance. Success in implementation of OSCE commitments requires a concerted effort by governments, parliaments, civil society, and members of ALL religions, races, and ethnic groups. We can talk, we can coordinate through the OSCE, but the primary responsibility ultimately rests with participating States.

Intolerance is a destructive seed. A person who has hatred in their heart is at risk of learning to hate all others. At the same time, a person who has learned tolerance and respect for diversity knows that all human beings are basically the same and that ethnic, religious and other differences are part of what makes our lives rich and interesting. Members of all religious, ethnic and other communities must work together in a concerted effort to combat intolerance, including against those groups to which they do not belong.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.