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**STATEMENT BY SENATOR ROBERTO ANTONIONE,
UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
AT THE INAUGURAL SESSION OF THE OSCE CONFERENCE ON
ANTI-SEMITISM AND ON OTHER FORMS OF INTOLERANCE**

8 June 2005

It is an honour and a great pleasure for me to participate in this OSCE Conference, which deals with issues fundamental to the European democratic culture, particularly in the year in which we are commemorating the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. I should therefore like to express my most sincere thanks on behalf of my Government to the Slovenian Chairmanship for organizing this important event and to the Government of Spain for hosting it in this magnificent city of Cordoba, an illustrious example of harmony and symbiosis between different cultures and religions.

We are here to confirm our commitment to combat all manifestations of intolerance and to increase our ability to do so by exchanging information and experiences that have proved effective at the national level.

In terms of legislation, my country has for many years had a modern legal framework in both the criminal and civil spheres to combat anti-Semitism, xenophobia and discrimination. Indeed, these are issues about which the Ministry of Justice is particularly sensitive.

I should like here, however, to mention in particular what has been done in Italy in recent months to uphold and implement the commitments undertaken in the past few years, which were reaffirmed in the decisions adopted at the Ministerial Council in Sofia in December.

The Italian Government has reacted firmly to the occasional manifestations of anti-Zionism by university student groups, which have also been interpreted as a symptom of latent anti-Semitism. The Minister of Education has appealed to the rectors of Italian universities not to underestimate such acts of intolerance and verbal and physical aggression and instead to take prompt measures to deal with those responsible.

The Italian Government believes that education is a key element in the fight against anti-Semitism and any other form of intolerance and that it should therefore involve itself in school curricula. Cultivating the memory of the Holocaust, other genocides and forms of intolerance and discrimination and the slave trade is not enough; education must also look to the future, stimulate social awareness, overcome prejudices and encourage thinking habits in

favour of tolerance. This calls for special teacher training, however, as has been pointed out by the special working group in the International Task Force on the Holocaust.

Other important measures have been taken in the crucial education sector, such as the establishment in June 2004 of a programme of events by an office for the integration of foreign students, which was designed, among other things, to promote inter-religious and intercultural dialogue.

The National Office against Racial Discrimination (UNAR) established in November 2004 within the Department for Equal Opportunities of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers has the task of promoting equal treatment, preventing or removing any form of discrimination based on race or ethnic origin and monitoring the effectiveness of protective tools. It has already successfully undertaken effective awareness-raising and communications campaigns, thanks to the successful testimonials by personalities from the world of journalism, sport and entertainment, who are known as “ambassadors of diversity”.

I should like finally to mention the activities of the Interministerial Committee against Discrimination and Anti-Semitism within the Ministry of the Interior, which has also been in operation for around a year and involves the participation of some nine departments, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was set up as an observatory for anti-Semitism and xenophobia at the national level, and the results that have been achieved until now are certainly encouraging, indicating that acts of intolerance are of a limited scope and on the decline.

Also within the Ministry of the Interior, a special police department (*Direzione Centrale della Polizia di Prevenzione*) conducts activities to prevent and combat racial discrimination, xenophobia and anti-Semitism on the Internet, although it is difficult to investigate these networks because of the problems with identifying the persons responsible, and to prosecute the providers of web space whose servers are outside the country.

I should like to conclude by extending to all forms of intolerance the idea recently expressed by Professor Yehezkel Dror* in relation to anti-Semitism that an effective strategy for combating it must be comprehensive, multidimensional and long term.

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