



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

HDIM. WORKING SESSION 12. FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

As delivered by Counsellor Hilde Austad,
Warsaw, 27 September 2016

Mr Moderator,

Ensuring freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief is fundamental to my government. To be able to exercise freedom of religion, citizens must be able to practice their religion without fear of discrimination. Norway will therefore launch an action plan against anti-Semitism in the beginning of October.

We have a small Jewish community, and there have been no serious violent anti-Semitic incidents in Norway. Still, anti-Semitism seems to be on the rise. The government has therefore engaged the Jewish community, other civil society organisations, academics, media and relevant institutions in a discussion of how to prevent prejudice and discrimination against Jews. The result is an action plan covering a broad range of topics. No less than six ministers have signed the action plan.

Allow me to mention a few points:

Preventing anti-Semitism in schools will be strengthened as part of the broader efforts to teach respect, mutual understanding, human rights and democracy. This includes more knowledge of Jewish culture and history, and training of teachers.

Support for Jewish museums and cultural institutions will contribute to better knowledge and understanding.

Registering hate crimes is a general priority for the police. Anti-Semitic hate crime will now be specified in the statistics.

Surveys of attitudes towards Jews and other minorities will be conducted every five years. It is important to monitor changes in these attitudes.

The government will increase its support to the Centre for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities, as well as to other research institutions working on anti-Semitism and Jewish culture.

Norway will cooperate with international organisations, including the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, the Council of Europe and, not least, ODIHR, in combating anti-Semitism.

Thank you, Mr Moderator