



Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting

on Addressing All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination

**25-26 May 2020
(online)**

ANNOTATED AGENDA

BACKGROUND

Commitments to addressing all forms of intolerance and discrimination represents an integral aspect of its concept of comprehensive security. OSCE participating States strongly condemn racial and ethnic hatred, xenophobia, and discrimination, as well as persecution on religious and ideological grounds, and have committed to combat these phenomena in all their forms (Copenhagen Document 1990). As also stated in the Copenhagen Document, OSCE participating States have committed to the equality of all before law and the need to guarantee legal protection to all persons against any discrimination on any ground.

Over the last few decades, the OSCE has attached great importance to addressing intolerance and discrimination, including a number of Ministerial Council declarations and commitments. They acknowledged the need to address the manifestations of intolerance, especially that they may give rise to conflict and violence on a wider scale, in addition to strengthening feelings of exclusion and insecurity, not only among the communities targeted but in societies as a whole. Since 2003, OSCE participating States have established a normative framework of Ministerial Council decisions to reflect their commitments to address these phenomena (MC Decision 4/03, further reinforced with subsequent MC Decisions 12/04, 10/05, 13/06, 10/07 and 9/09).

At the same time, participating States have committed to address intolerant discourse and hate crime while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief (MC Decision 10/05, MC Decision 10/07). Furthermore, participating States have acknowledged the specificity of different forms of intolerance, while at the same time recognizing the importance of taking a comprehensive approach and addressing cross-cutting issues in order to effectively combat all forms of discrimination (MC Decision 10/07). Civil society has an indispensable role in the process of addressing intolerance and discrimination: at the 2006 Brussels Ministerial Council, OSCE participating States identified the need for “effective partnerships and strengthened dialogue and co-operation between civil society and State authorities in the sphere of promoting mutual respect and understanding, equal opportunities and inclusion of all within society and combating intolerance.”

Since Copenhagen, many positive developments in countering intolerance and discrimination have taken place throughout the OSCE area, with participating States implementing policies

and strategies aimed at combatting manifestations of racism, intolerance and discrimination, including hate crimes and intolerant discourse. Nevertheless, despite progress made, intolerance and discrimination continue to be a concern across the OSCE region, as manifestations of racism, xenophobia, intolerance and discrimination remain a reality for many members of different religious, ethnic or other groups. The work of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) towards tolerance and non-discrimination includes comprehensive assistance programs for government, civil society and non-governmental actors, as well as the publication of an annual hate crime report (MC Decision 9/09).

The current COVID-19 pandemic has added new layers of complexity to addressing intolerance and discrimination. The pandemic has led to tragic loss of life and made a deep impact on economic security, with a risk of a further recession phase for the global economy. Unfortunately, it has also led to violations of human rights: incidents of racist scapegoating in some countries, a dire situation for many migrants, worsening situation for Roma and Sinti, and the increase of domestic violence, further complicating the task of addressing intolerance and discrimination. It has fuelled the proliferation of various forms of online intolerance and discrimination, which can lead to acts of violence and hate crimes. The pandemic has also highlighted the need for timely action to prevent interethnic tension and conflict, especially in the time of crises.

It is necessary for all participating States to ensure that human rights are fully upheld, during this and any other crises. The current complex situation not only presents a challenge, but also creates an opportunity for new, tailored and improved approaches to addressing all forms of intolerance and discrimination. The first Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting (SHDM) will assess the efforts made by participating States in addressing all forms of intolerance and discrimination, with a particular focus on the situations of compound crises.

The objectives of the SHDM are to:

1. Review and assess challenges currently facing participating States in the implementation of OSCE commitments on addressing all forms of intolerance and discrimination during compound crises and in online fora in order to prevent discrimination from escalating into tensions or conflict.
2. Provide a platform for the exchange of good practice in addressing all forms of intolerance and discrimination particularly during crisis situations and in online discourse.
3. Make recommendations to the OSCE participating States in addressing all forms of intolerance and discrimination, and regarding the possible roles for the OSCE institutions to support them in this process.

DAY 1, 25 MAY 2020

15.00 – 16.00

OPENING SESSION

Opening remarks

Introductory addresses

Technical information

16.00 – 18.00

SESSION I: Challenges to Realizing Tolerance and Non-Discrimination and the Impact of Compound Crises

Incidents of intolerance against ethnic minorities, Roma and Sinti, migrants, and other bias-motivated intolerance continue to remain a significant concern across the OSCE region. Data gathered through ODIHR's annual hate crime reporting indicate that many minority communities experience intolerance and discrimination, often through hate crimes. Additionally, since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of racism on society has been exacerbated by the heightened security situation and the current global economic challenges, as well as by the intolerant discourse and scapegoating of minorities. Reports have proliferated of hate-motivated attacks across the OSCE region against people of Asian backgrounds and from other minority communities. Roma and Sinti, and refugees and migrants, often the most vulnerable members of our societies, have also found themselves singled out for abuse and hatred.

In general, victims of hate crime often belong to groups facing discrimination and marginalization on a daily basis. In addition to inflicting lasting trauma on the victims, their families and communities, hate crimes damage social cohesion by stoking fear and division. In times of crisis, the threat posed by these crimes only intensifies, heightening the sense of fear and uncertainty. This makes it even more important that all OSCE participating States uphold their commitments to record and investigate hate crimes swiftly, support victims as they report their experiences, and ensure the availability of all necessary psychological, social and legal support for the victims.

This session will consider the challenges related to realizing tolerance and non-discrimination in the context of compound crises, and address the impact these crises can have on racism, xenophobia and discrimination in the society. The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent economic recession can exacerbate intolerant discourse and the scapegoating of minorities, making the task of effectively addressing racism, xenophobia, intolerance and discrimination in society even more difficult.

Possible questions for discussion can include:

- What are the current manifestations and impact of intolerance and discrimination in the OSCE area, and how have they changed because of the COVID-19-related crises?
- How can participating States address intolerance and discrimination effectively in the context of compound crises, and how could this facilitate social cohesion and security?
- What opportunities and good practices exist in the OSCE region for partnerships and networks, involving states, civil society and other stakeholders to realize tolerance and non-discrimination in a time of crisis?

DAY 2, 26 MAY 2020

10.30 – 12.30

SESSION II: Addressing Contemporary Forms of Online Intolerance and Discrimination, Which Can Lead to Acts of Violence and Hate Crimes

The attitudes and tensions that lead to inter-communal conflict, hate crimes, and acts of violence are often deeply rooted in stereotypes and misconceptions, many of which are promoted and spread through online forums and platforms. Stereotypes are being used to discriminate against specific groups, affecting men and women differently, with some of them facing multiple forms of discrimination (such as ethnicity and gender). In the current challenging situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, online intolerance and discrimination have particularly affected certain minority communities, such as people of Asian origin or Roma and Sinti. At the same time, in a number of participating States, the continued movement of migrants and refugees has been accompanied with increasingly intolerant and discriminatory attitudes and behaviors from all sectors of society, often expressed online, which can then lead to acts of violence and hate crimes.

The OSCE participating States have long recognized the inherent challenges and dangers connected to intolerant discourse that manifests itself as hate on the internet - “Cyberhate” (MC Decision 9/09) cites the need for participating States to address hate on the internet. While states need to ensure freedom of expression, they must also fulfill their obligation to renounce intolerant discourse by public officials and ensure robust interventions whenever comments expressed on the internet pose a threat to targeted individuals and communities. In the same spirit, OSCE Ministerial Council decisions call upon participating States to develop educational programmes to foster a greater understanding of and respect for different cultures, ethnicities, religions or beliefs (MC Decision 13/06), to raise public awareness of the existence and unacceptability of intolerance and discrimination (MC Decision 10/05), and the importance of a continued and strengthened interfaith and intercultural dialogue to promote greater tolerance, respect and mutual understanding (MC Decision 4/03).

This session will address the need to confront online intolerance and discrimination and facilitate mutual respect and understanding to build more cohesive and inclusive societies, while also fully respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as the freedom of opinion and expression, and freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief. Participants will be invited to share good practices for addressing online intolerance and discrimination, especially those that integrate a gender-responsive approach and aim to achieve a more balanced representation of marginalized and minority groups in order to promote equality for all.

Questions for discussion include:

- What is the impact of intolerant online discourse on different individuals, communities and society as a whole, particularly during the current crisis?
- How can we effectively address online intolerance and discrimination without interfering with freedom of expression and other fundamental freedoms?
- What are the roles of government agencies, NHRIs, civil society and other stakeholders in monitoring, preventing and addressing online intolerance and discrimination?

14.30 – 16.30

SESSION III: From Early Warning to Early Action: Prevention of Discrimination from Escalation into Tensions or Conflict

OSCE participating States have prohibited all forms of discrimination for minority communities and have committed to address these phenomena in all their forms (Copenhagen Document 1990). They recognized that manifestations of discrimination and intolerance threaten the security of individuals, communities and societies, including minorities, and may give rise to wider-scale violence and conflict that can undermine international stability and security.

Recent challenges linked to the COVID-19 crisis and contemporary forms of intolerance render early action to prevent tensions and conflicts between communities more important than ever in the OSCE area. In a number of participating States, members of national minorities, migrants, and Roma and Sinti have been disproportionately affected by the current health and economic crises due to varying, and sometimes insufficient, levels of access to basic healthcare, as well as to vital information in a language that is understood by them. Civil society and media have reported cases in which the implementation of emergency measures have raised concerns about their relevance and proportionality, disproportionately impacting some minority communities. Participating States have an obligation to ensure that, even in crisis and post-crisis situations, all the fundamental rights are secured without discrimination and in particular, the needs of marginalized and disadvantaged groups are met in order to prevent inequality and rising tensions between communities. Moreover, in the case of Roma and Sinti, participating States are called to consult Roma and Sinti populations in crisis situations in order to facilitate adequate procedures, to ensure that the specific situation of Roma and Sinti people is addressed, while paying special attention to the needs of Roma and Sinti women and children (MC Decision 3/03).

Implementation of policies aimed at promoting the sustainable integration of diverse and multi-ethnic societies is one of the most effective tools to prevent modern conflicts. In the current situation, acts of intolerance and discrimination, including against minorities, are not only unacceptable but also counterproductive. Overcoming the common health crisis, as well as the economic and social challenges that will follow, can only be successful through inclusion and the strength of diversity in OSCE participating States. Promoting stability within societies by focusing on the needs of people from minority communities, while maintaining a strong focus on inclusive policies and coalition building that encourage unity in society is needed, particularly during times of crisis.

This session will explore the progress made by participating States in preventing the escalation of discrimination into tensions or conflict, and the steps that need to be taken to advance from early warning to early action. Participants will particularly be invited to share good practices and lessons learnt in implementing relevant OSCE commitments.

Questions for discussion include:

- Are there any specific threats that the current public health crisis presents for preventing the escalation of discrimination into tensions or conflict?
- How can we mainstream gender, engage youth and meaningfully involve representatives of minority and majority communities together in dialogue, coalitions, and activities aiming to prevent the escalation of discrimination into tensions or conflict?
- What examples of good practice and cooperation by governments and other stakeholders are there regarding the integration of diverse and multiethnic societies?

16.30 – 17.30

CLOSING SESSION

Reports from the working sessions

Comments from the floor

Closing remarks

17.30

Closing of the meeting

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