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by

H.E. Ivo Vajgl, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia,

at the

***Brussels OSCE Conference on Tolerance
and the Fight against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination***

Session 1: Legislative and institutional mechanisms and governmental action, including law enforcement

Mr Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Republic of Slovenia warmly welcomes the organization of the OSCE Conference on Tolerance and the Fight against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, taking place here in Brussels. I would like to use this opportunity to thank the Belgian organisers for hosting this important event. The conference represents the third important OSCE event this year in promoting tolerance and the fight against all forms of discrimination.

These important issues will be high on the agenda of Slovenia's OSCE Chairmanship next year. After a series of conferences, which began in 2003 and continued this year, it is clear that the standard-making process is more or less completed. The future OSCE activities should focus primarily on the effective implementation of the commitments made so far and to ensure an efficient "follow-up". The Republic of Slovenia will therefore press to bring the

results of these conferences to real life, as well as the Permanent Council decisions on Tolerance, and the Fight against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, dated 29 July 2004, and on Combating Anti-Semitism, dated 22 April 2004.

We believe that it would be reasonable to combine the existing "parallel process" (*anti-Semitism on one side, and all other forms of intolerance on the other*) which will take place in the OSCE in the forthcoming year. Any form of intolerance and discrimination is unique in its own essence and origin, but the methods of the fight against them are, in many fields, identical and demand an adjusted and integral approach.

Furthermore, we believe that co-operation in this area between the OSCE institutions is extremely important, especially with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the High Commissioner on National Minorities. We advocate a strong role of the ODIHR in this process.

Mr Chairman,

It is essential that we enhance co-operation with other international organizations active in the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination, such as the Council of Europe. The Republic of Slovenia will aspire towards strengthening the relations between the OSCE and the Council of Europe at the secretariats level as well as in the field. By exploiting comparative advantages of both organizations we should aim at achieving synergy and avoiding duplication.

Slovenia wishes to continue work in the field of the fight against all forms of intolerance and discrimination. Adjusted policies are necessary, as on the one hand, they promote rights and freedoms and on the other, obligations and responsibilities. Without knowledge of other cultures, either minority or majority, the acceptance of the difference would remain an illusion. It is the lack of such knowledge that often leads to the manifestation of intolerance, xenophobia and prejudice among people. It is therefore important to encourage inter-cultural, inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue. It would be necessary to establish minimum integration standards, which ensure the respect and understanding of multicultural diversity and do not lead to assimilation. Bearing this in mind, Slovenia considers including migration and integration as a priority of its Chairmanship.

We must be aware, that the increased mobility of the population – as well as migratory flows and immigrant streams – is a positive element in the economic and social development of society and can contribute to democratic trends and understanding among cultures. However, migrations are often perceived negatively and are marked by harmful stereotypes, intolerance and violations of human rights. Policies adopted by states in this regard, should be based on common values, solidarity and respect for difference.

We believe that this conference will be successful and will fulfil our expectations of fruitful results.

Thank you.