

**OSCE High-Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination
Astana, 29-30 June 2010**

Plenary Session 4

Intervention by the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has made great progress in recent years in its efforts to combat and prevent crimes based on intolerance and discrimination.

ODIHR has noted in successive reports that the UK is one of very few states that fully meets its obligations to record and publish data on hate crime. Since 2008 police forces have recorded data on hate crimes, following on from the adoption of a common definition of hate crime. This data is becoming more robust and will eventually provide a reliable picture of the extent of hate crime in our country. Our new government has reiterated its commitment to challenge hate crime in seeking its goal of providing 'Freedom, Fairness and Responsibility'

A crucial part of this achievement is the provision of transparent and accurate hate crime data. It is perhaps counter-intuitive that governments would want to see a rise in reported crime but we know that many hate crimes go unreported or are not recognised by authorities. This is why we also measure hate crime through partnerships with Civil Society and through the extensive British Crime Survey. The latter importantly provides an understanding of not only reported crime but an estimate of actual victimisation.

Disaggregated data is being provided to a national police body, the Association of Chief Police Officers, for hate crimes based on disability, race, religion and transgender. There are different elements to some hate crimes that mean our approach may be different but the right to protection from bigoted abuse is a universal one that we all share.

Revised guidelines for all police forces are about to be published. Guidelines for prosecutors have already been published, and in addition, the judiciary seeks to update its members through training provided by the Judicial Studies Board and by revisions to the Judges Bench-book, their sentencing guidance book

The UK has a range of legislative protection from discrimination, from civil protection from inequality to enhanced sentencing legislation for crimes motivated by bias. They support our fundamental beliefs that we should all share the same protection from the law and that a transparent approach to hate crime builds the confidence of communities who are targeted for abuse.

Oversight mechanisms, which involve standing committees representing the criminal justice agencies, and civil society agencies, ensure that the police adhere to the UK's international and national undertakings, and promote best practice.

Successive reports by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance have noted the progress made by the UK in these respects.

The challenges posed by violent organised hate groups is now countered by specialised national police units which gather information and advise local police forces. The UK recognises the relationship between incitement online and violence on the streets and the police have recently put in place an online system for reporting hate crime. No state can reduce the harm caused by organised violence or internet based incitement unilaterally. In the OSCE and with the support of ODIHR we have a unique opportunity to work to reduce these corrosive activities in ways that respect states individual legislative frameworks. To ignore this opportunity will increase the harm in our communities. We must not allow that to happen.