

OSCE Review Conference  
(Warsaw, 30 September-8 October 2010)

Working Session 2  
Intolerance against Migrants  
(Specifically selected topic)

Delegation of Turkey to the OSCE

Mr Moderator,

I would like to start by expressing Turkey's gratitude to the Kazakh Chairmanship for having placed this specifically selected topic high on the agenda. I would have preferred to speak at a time when concerns regarding intolerant and discriminative behaviors displayed across the OSCE region towards the most vulnerable groups including migrants were effectively addressed. Regrettably, recent developments in particular in Europe rendered the review of the implementation of relevant commitments all the more important.

With a population of 3.5 million Turks living in Western European countries, the situation of migrant workers is of Turkey's particular concern. Our lasting and primary objective is their full integration with the host societies, while preserving their own culture and identity.

Mr Moderator,

We have long committed ourselves to combat discrimination, intolerance and xenophobia against migrants and migrant workers since they as human beings, regardless of their racial or ethnic origin, have the right to be treated equally and fairly. Failure to treat migrants equally would inevitably end up with deprivation from the valuable contribution of the migrants to the economic, social and cultural development of the societies.

Migrants very often become victimized by intolerant, discriminative and xenophobic attitudes. They are over represented in the less prestigious employment sectors, and educational achievements of migrant children lag behind the majority population since they are often channeled to schools that orient pupils to vocational jobs, or special schools for children with severe learning difficulties, physical disabilities or behavioural problems, *die Sonderschule*. Lack of efficiency in command of the official language, often resorted as an excuse for such discrimination, in most cases does not correspond with the truth.

We observe with great concern the rise of far right and racist parties in Europe. Migrants are often used as scapegoats in public debates and get stigmatized particularly during election period. Given that a large proportion of migrant populations in Europe are from Muslim countries, stereotyping Muslims and associating Islam with terrorism and other societal sins only add to the challenges faced by Muslim migrants.

A cartoon recently distributed in one participating State where leader of a populist far right party asks Christian children to cast stone to a Muslim child, called Ahmet, is not an isolated case but a true reflection of the public discourse.

Incitement to violence or hatred should not be tolerated. Standing indifferent to the sufferings of migrants is generally an option of populist preference for mainstream politicians who feel pressured under the fear of losing votes. We should keep in mind that keeping silent is manifestation of approval. All stakeholders including migrant communities, the mainstream media, academics, trade unions, civil society institutions, the private sector and in particular policy makers should step in.

I would like to draw your attention to the work conducted by the Alliance of Civilizations on the issue of migration. A research paper prepared by the Alliance of Civilizations Secretariat dealing with issues of integration especially as they relate to Muslim origin immigrants in Europe provides valuable insight to the question. The OSCE human dimension enriched with vibrant contribution of civil society would benefit from closer cooperation between these two Organizations in particular on questions relating to migration.

I would ask the three Personal Representatives of the Chairmanship to elaborate on how tolerance for and non-discrimination of migrants could best be promoted in a way to ensure effective integration of migrants. Turkey commends and supports the work of ODIHR and the three Personal Representatives in raising awareness on the threats posed by discrimination. In particular their efforts for preventing hate crimes deserve our appreciation.

Since the problems Muslims are facing today go far beyond the scope of intolerance and discrimination, Turkey finds the proposal to formulate definition of "Islamophobia" useful and asks the ODIHR to initiate work on this issue.

We encourage incoming Lithuanian Chairmanship to continue this path with a strengthened focus on racism and xenophobia. Turkey is also confident that these elements will find the right place in the messages that will be conveyed by our leaders during the OSCE Summit in Astana.

Thank you for your attention.