

OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING 2006

EU statement for the working session 14: Tolerance and non-discrimination II

11 October, Warsaw

Mr. Moderator,

It is the honour to speak on behalf of the EU. This morning session devoted to tolerance and non-discrimination gives us an opportunity to present position of the European Union on issues related to national minorities and prevention of aggressive nationalism, chauvinism, and ethnic cleansing.

Let me start with warmly welcoming OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Rolf Ekéus. We want to use this opportunity to renew our full support for the work carried out by the High Commissioner. European Union highly values the role of High Commissioner in the OSCE, especially in the area of conflict prevention and early warning. We want to comment his active role in fulfilling his mandate and providing expert assistance to participating States in such spheres like legislation, education, labour and social integration. I think that here at Human Dimension Implementation Meeting we should emphasis his impartiality allowing him to be effective in his endeavours.

Respect for the rights of the persons belonging to national minorities is one of the basic values of modern democracy. This aspect of the work of the OSCE is not always very visible, but it does not mean that is not important. Even more – we see a big potential in the OSCE to strengthen the work to protect and promote the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. The European Union would like to emphasize the importance it attaches to the fulfillment of international commitments related to the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, which continue to be a key topic within the framework of the human rights dialogues that EU conducts with its partners.

The European Union commends efforts undertaken by field presences of the OSCE and of the High Commissioner in the identification and search of early resolution of ethnic tensions that might endanger peace, stability or friendly relations between the participating States of the OSCE. We welcome the study commissioned by the HCNM on the matter of integration policies in diverse societies and presented to the Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. The EU is ready to work together with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in development of minority and integration policies.

Let me now address the issue of aggressive nationalism, chauvinism, and ethnic cleansing. There is no doubt that everyone in this room shares opinion that we should prevent all of them. Crucial question is how to do it. We have stressed during last meetings in Warsaw the importance of the education, which seems to be the most effective instrument to tackle the manifestations of aggressive nationalism and chauvinism, which can lead to ethnic cleansing.

The EU and its member states have significant achievements in overcoming these phenomena. But continues efforts and awareness of the threat of such symptoms are needed. We want to reiterate that multi-cultural education, training and youth partnership are crucial to overcome tensions. We want to note progress achieved during last year in bringing to justice persons responsible for ethnic cleansing. This is one of the important steps in the fight against impunity. We believe that this can be also a part of clear message to all people that ethnic cleansing cannot occur any more.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia ¹ and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Montenegro and Serbia, EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

Thank you.

¹ Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process