

**Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
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Session 16:

Promotion of tolerance, non-discrimination and mutual respect and understanding: the implementation of OSCE commitments

**INTERVENTION
by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear colleagues,

The UN 1995 Declaration of Principles on Tolerance defines this notion as “respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty, it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace.”

Mr. Moderator,

We are convinced that promoting tolerance and mutual understanding should remain in priority list of the OSCE in general and ODIHR particularly. We hope that this issue will find its proper place in the agenda of the OSCE Spanish Chairmanship for the next year.

We think that a special role in promoting tolerance and understanding belongs to Personal Representatives of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office who raise the profile of our common sense against intolerance and discrimination and monitor situation in the Participating States. We fully support the mandate of the Personal Representatives.

Distinguished audience,

It is not hard to imagine that if believers make an effort to learn and to understand the deeper meaning of their faith, tolerance can find its proper place in social and political life. Such people would not be an easy prey for arms merchants and politicians.

Lack of knowledge caused by ignorance is one of the main obstacles for tolerance. People don't know their own religion and a fortiori other's religions. Thus believers of other religions, even other denominations, become enemies.

In that respect, the role of the laws and the state is very important to open the door of enlightenment. The ideology of the state should rise on the principles of freedom of thought and freedom of belief. State should give the opportunity to the other beliefs and ideologies to teach and diffuse their principles. Thus we can have the opportunity to learn other truths. There is not one truth in our world. With these new truths others can come closer to us and we can save ourselves from prejudices. We can understand the other and thus we can tolerate them.

Therefore we share fully the view stated in the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance that "Education is the most effective means of preventing intolerance. The first step in tolerance education is to teach people what their shared rights and freedoms are, so that they may be respected, and to promote the will to protect those of others."

It is obvious that our future is culture of tolerance, culture of peace. If we are not able to bring up such a culture, our common future could be tragic.

Mr. Moderator,

Supporting a trend towards continuing and deepening of a dialogue between civilizations, we would like to stress its multi-profile meaning. We think that implementation of programs in the fields of education, information and cultural dialogue will significantly facilitate mutual respect and tolerance, understanding and trust, which are in great demand for solution of common problems that we are facing.

Situated at the historical crossroads between East and West, Azerbaijan has absorbed the values of both civilizations. Having a rich heritage of multi-dimensional and multi-cultural elements in its social tissue Azerbaijan is a democratic and secular state. As such, with its historical and cultural background, Azerbaijan is a land of tolerance. Azerbaijan has used its historical experience and made its own contribution to inter-religious and intercultural dialogue and more than once has confirmed its adherence to this process.

Mr. Moderator,

We would like to express profound support to the states that fell victims to terrorist attacks. While strongly condemning terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and reaffirming our commitment to jointly fight this global scourge, we register our serious concern over attempts to link terrorism with Islamic religion, culture and people.

There is a dire necessity to stop and reverse a growing tendency towards Islamophobia in the world. Azerbaijan, in the capacity of the Chairman of the Ministerial Council of the Organization of the Islamic Conference calls on OSCE participating States to undertake concrete measures to enhance dialogue and broaden understanding among nations, cultures and religions by promoting tolerance and respect for freedom of religion and belief. It is of vital importance to raise public awareness about tenets and values of Islam worldwide, including in the Muslim societies. To this end, we plan to host in Baku in 2007 under the OIC aegis an international conference on the role of mass media in developing tolerance and mutual understanding.

Thank you for your attention.