

DELEGATION OF TURKEY

11 October 2006

**HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
(Warsaw, 2-13 October 2006)**

Working Session 14: Tolerance and Non-Discrimination II – National Minorities

STATEMENT

Mr. Moderator,

I should like to start by commending the High Commissioner of National Minorities for the broad panoply of its activities, particularly for the recent interest he has taken in “new minorities” in established democracies. New minorities, be it migrants, refugees or other third country nationals lawfully residing in host countries, should be entitled to rights at par with national minorities.

The study that High Commissioner has commissioned and circulated provides for a solid ground and justification for the OSCE to begin an open-minded institutional discussion, as we think this matter falls within the competence of our organization.

High Commissioner’s policy of promoting integration with respect for diversity through encouraging participation and sense of belonging on the one hand, combating discrimination and prejudice on the other, is an approach that should be applicable for both old and new minorities equally.

We also very much appreciate the concept of “learning societies” that seeks to underline the will to formulate common strategies to common problems in a deliberative framework. Community cohesion as well as protection of cultural identities are two main goals that Turkey pursue both in its own reform process as well as its policies vis-à-vis migrant communities living abroad.

A few NGO representatives as well as the US delegation mentioned Turkey in their statements today.

As a rule NGOs receive our admiration for their dedication and govern respect for the functions they fulfil in being instruments of civil society’s participation in the affairs of the state and of the governments which serve them. But alas, some by their own making disqualify themselves of such treatment not necessarily by the goals they pursue but by their choice of title. An NGO which seeks to bury itself in the ashes of history dating back over 6 centuries by its choice for a title: namely Constantinopolitan Society is a case in point.

Some of the arguments advanced in that intervention have already been laid to rest by our remarks yesterday. Today let me draw attention to the absence of two vital elements in that intervention which critically determine its credibility. They are the facts that there has been no argument that the practices of the Turkish Government are unlawful or a claim that they contravene its obligations under international legal instruments to which it is a party.

Let me make as a closing comment which explicitly refers to remarks by the representative of the US as well as the Norwegian Helsinki Committee that while no doubt they are making an honest attempt to monitor developments and progress in Turkey, the revolutionary achievements of "reform" creating an irreversible process seem to have escaped their attention. What we would normally expect is not a grudging admission of such progress but also words of encouragement to give heart to those who believe they are in the interest of Turkey and will result in practices that the Turkish nation deserves.

Thank you.