



**PERMANENT MISSION
OF TURKEY TO THE OSCE**

**OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
(Warsaw, 28 September-9 October)**

Working Session 10 : Tolerance and non-discrimination II (continued)

**Statement by Ambassador Yusuf Buluc
Permanent Representative of Turkey to the OSCE**

Thank you Mr. Moderator,

I would like to begin by congratulating the ODIHR as well as the representatives of the civil society for initiating such a lively debate in this working session, focusing on our commitments in the fields of tolerance and non-discrimination. This delegation has always been keen to listen to and interact with the civil society a valuable presence that the OSCE region, particularly Europe, today, more than ever needs when it comes to promoting diversity and tolerance and fighting racism, discrimination and xenophobia.

We welcome especially the three Personal Representatives attending the HDIM for the first time. We thank ODIHR for putting this team together which had seen in the past to have a few challenges acting in concert. Even the fact of their being seen together on the same side of the table gives us heart that this critical item of OSCE agenda is well addressed. That we have them to represent the Chairmanship as well as the Organization has much more than a symbolic value. They personify and give face to the overall effort. Having almost completed the first year of their tenure and becoming more confident in their capacity and competence, we expect them to be more visible and active in the near future.

Since our last gathering in Warsaw on this topic, the facts on the ground confirm the enduring gravity of the threat posed by the gradual advancement of intolerance, racism, xenophobia and disrespect to inherent human dignity in almost all segments of our societies.

Today, intolerance and discrimination against persons belonging to specific ethnic and religious groups or people with other status continue to be steadily on

the rise. Certain nationals are under constant physical and verbal assault, are even murdered. Believers of certain faiths get their hands stamped before entering their places of worship. These are the most recent examples happened in close neighborhood.

Recent surveys by NGO's and international organizations make a compelling case that hate motivated incidents, racist and xenophobic violence, ethnic profiling, hostility against migrants are not mere common denominators of the so-called `isolated` actions of ultra nationalist and extreme right-wing groups, appearing with their calls for national and ethnic purity. The scope and the frequency of these incidents, fostered by blatant ignorance in terms of inadequate official responses, deserve decisive and result-oriented action. Mass media coverage portraying the migrants as the scapegoats of negative trends in country of residence, depicting the Muslims as the prime suspect of terrorism, growing anti-Semitic manifestations are only a few examples of recurrent challenges that require prompt and careful deliberation of the participating States.

Role and responsibility of political leadership in stemming intolerance and discrimination deserves special study. The classical case of a dichotomy between "lead" and "follow" should not prevent political leaders to assume their responsibilities to lead rather than cater to populist perceptions of discrimination, segregation and hate. For reasons of time constraint, I shall spare the audience an overdose of a repetition of the theme of adverse effects of current economic and financial crisis as well as of self-serving politicians contributing to the resurgence of intolerance ahead of and during elections.

Fortunately, there are also positive developments; in the way of better legislation, or new initiatives to combat intolerance, racism and xenophobia. However, political leadership and responsibility as well as education and active civil society involvement should be the points of departure in responding to these challenges effectively. Non-discrimination is a *sine qua non* for the enjoyment and exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms by each and every individual. We should recognize that we are all different, that differences are the richness for our societies, but that we are indeed in the end all equal. There will be many circumstances, as is the case of economic downturn today, ahead of our governments that will test the level of maturity of our democracies.

Mr. Moderator,

These challenges should not serve as a cause for discouragement, but rather provide a source of inspiration to intensify our efforts in combating intolerance and discrimination. In this regard, I am glad to note that UN Alliance of Civilizations Initiative, co-sponsored by Turkey and Spain, by now has received

the support of more than 100 States and international organizations, and as such helping to counter the forces that fuel polarization and extremism.

Among the three presentations by the Personal Representatives, I should need to take certain exception to what we heard from Mr. Mauro who attempts to make the case that intolerance and discrimination lead to one specific type of “undesirable”, that is Islamic fundamentalism. I should not think that Mr. Mauro seeks to imply that this unique type of fundamentalism, once it is properly treated there would be salvation for all and absolution from all societal sins. We should need to discuss this in greater detail with Mr. Mauro. But before I do, perhaps co-Personal Representative Mr. Akhmetov might be prompted to dispute the objectivity of that statement. Suffice it to say that fundamentalism is not in the monopoly of Islam.

We add our voice to those in inviting the incoming Kazakh chairmanship, in reflection of its reputation as a country of peaceful co-existence of faiths and ethnicities, to translate its traditions into action. A possible OSCE high level conference in 2010, with an appropriate agenda addressing all forms of intolerance in a balanced manner, may provide a valuable opportunity to this end.

Thank you.