



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Declaration on Violent Hate Incidents in the OSCE Region

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 23, 2009

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

It pains me to take the floor under this item to discuss negotiations which were under way here in Vienna on a declaration regarding violent hate incidents in the OSCE region.

This Permanent Council is entrusted by our Ministers, and by our rules of procedure, as the principal decision-making body for political consultations between meetings of the Ministerial Council. Given these responsibilities, we very much regret the failure of the OSCE over the last three months to reach consensus on a simple and straightforward expression of concern about incidents and trends regarding violent hate incidents in our region. Our Organization has always stood for values of tolerance, mutual understanding, and the rights of all. The goal of the draft declaration we had tabled along with Canada was to restate and refresh these concerns and to put our organization on record once again as standing firmly against these reprehensible actions.

We drew attention to the increasing number of violent attacks on the Roma within the OSCE region early in this year. On International Roma Day, after another gruesome attack, we suggested a PC declaration to put the Organization's concerns on record. In a second statement in May, we stated our intention to circulate a draft declaration and we encouraged and welcomed the contributions of all Delegations to that process. The legitimacy with which some voters bestowed on parties that openly campaigned on xenophobic and anti-minority platforms during the European Parliament elections should have only further heightened our political concerns, and given additional impetus to a political statement.

However, instead of demonstrating a unified and principled stand against such incidents, this initiative has been met in many quarters with excessive defensiveness, delaying tactics, and extraneous procedural demands.

The first draft, sponsored by the U.S. and Canada, has been circulating since early May. It was available to all delegations as an official document for nearly two months. We received useful feedback from a number of delegations and agreed to some suggested edits. We were guided by the desire of a number of our partners to ensure as much as possible that the text faithfully reflected existing consensus language on the topic. We were not seeking to adopt new commitments, but to recommit on a political level here in

this Permanent Council to standards we have all previously accepted. Revised drafts were issued July 10, and after further consultations a second revision circulated on July 16.

All along we continued to state our simple goal to have the OSCE expeditiously issue a clear political statement about rising intolerance in the OSCE region. We are disappointed that what should have been an easy and quick step has proven too difficult for some.

We wish to thank the Chairmanship and the numerous delegations who expressed their support for this declaration. In particular we are grateful to our Canadian colleagues for joining us as a cosponsor. We also would like to thank all those delegations who supported the declaration during yesterday's formal discussion in the Human Dimension Committee. But from those discussions, it was also made clear that some delegations prefer further delay, and are not ready to move to action before the summer recess.

We remain convinced that the OSCE cannot afford to be complacent, but needs to play an important role in speaking out against violent hate incidents in the OSCE region.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.