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**OSCE CONFERENCE ON COMBATING DISCRIMINATION, PROMOTING
MUTUAL RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING
(Bucharest, 7-8 June 2007)**

Plenary Session 4

Mr. Chairperson,

Thank you for allowing our delegation to express sincere thanks to the host country Romania as well as Spanish OSCE Chairmanship in Office for organizing this important conference on Combating Discrimination, Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding.

It is the privilege to be able to participate in this follow up event to the Cordoba Conference. We would like to note with pleasure that the Republic of Croatia is doing its outmost in consistent and unconditional implementation of respective commitments and recommendations.

Mr. Chairperson,

In the last decade, Croatia has made considerable progress in addressing issues related to mutual respect and understanding.

According to the Constitution, ratified international treaties form the part of the internal legal system of the Republic of Croatia, and in terms of legal force, are above the law. Nevertheless, we are constantly conducting serious efforts to improve their implementation at the national level.

Croatia has been constantly engaged by improving the legislative framework concerning hate crimes, racial propaganda and racial discrimination since 2000. The latest amendments to the Criminal Code that came into force on 1 October 2006 contain for the first time the definition of hate crime. It includes all criminal offences from the Criminal Code motivated by hate towards a person because of the race, skin colour, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other beliefs, national or social background, property, birth, education, social status, age, health or other characteristics.

Furthermore, the Attorney General issued a Directive to all county and municipal State Attorney Offices considering the proceedings to follow in case of criminal offences motivated by hate and in keeping records of hate crimes. According to this Directive, all State Attorney Offices must proceed with special care in the criminal cases referred to and such cases must be solved promptly. In addition, special records of hate crimes have to be kept, making possible the monitoring of the hate crime processes. State Attorney Offices will include such cases in their annual reports as well.

Mr. Chairperson,

In order to make legislative framework more effective Ministry of Interior signed Memorandum of Understanding with OSCE/ODIHR. Thereby Croatia included the ODIHR's Law Enforcement Officer Program on Combating Hate Crime (LEOP) within the training curricula of the Croatian Police Academy.

Bearing in mind the importance of education and its crucial role in preventing all forms of discrimination and intolerance, Croatia is one of the first countries that included education on the Holocaust and anti-Semitism through the pilot program in primary schools.

Furthermore, we organized the 2nd OSCE tolerance implementation meeting in Dubrovnik last October, dealing with education to promote mutual respect and understanding and teaching about the Holocaust. It provided an excellent opportunity for educational experts from OSCE participating States to highlight areas where public and private educational programs have been undertaken to promote remembrance of the Holocaust. The meeting also served to highlight practical initiatives and tools developed by educational experts and civil society.

All these activities resulted in raising awareness of citizens, as well as the ability of police officers to recognize and process hate crimes, i.e. criminal and minor offences motivated by hate.

Mr. Chairperson,

The excellent co-operation between Croatia, OSCE and ODIHR is particularly illustrated by three round tables and meetings which will be organized in the course of this month in Zagreb: with police officers, public prosecutors, judges and information collecting experts. The purpose of the forthcoming meetings is assessing the results of the LEOP implementation, recognizing the achievements and gaps, as well as discussing the next steps.

Furthermore, the Republic of Croatia is open to future co-operation and we feel that together with OSCE and ODIHR we can contribute to suppressing hate motivated crimes through sharing best practices and know how with other participating states.

Thank you for your attention.