

OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism and on Other Forms of Intolerance
(Cordoba, 8 and 9 June 2005)

Statement
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Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished participants,

It is a great honour for me to speak today at this prominent OSCE forum, which provides us with another opportunity to discuss a wide range of issues related to preventing and combating anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance and discrimination, including sharing our best practices and experiences within this context.

I would like to express our appreciation to the OSCE Presidency, Slovenia and Spanish hosts for taking the initiative to organize this important event and creating propitious environment for our work.

The OSCE participating States have already made a number of commitments intended to counter anti-Semitism, intolerance and discrimination, which pose major threats to peace, security and human development. Ukraine commends concerted and to the great extent unique efforts of the OSCE community to promote tolerance and mutual respect, human rights and confidence between states and peoples, including through development of inter-cultural and inter-faith dialogue.

The task we are facing today, however, is not only to condemn the said abhorrent phenomena, but to elaborate the most efficient ways and means to eliminate them and prevent their resurgence. In this respect, sharing and promoting good methods and practices are of special importance. Thus, we welcome the action-oriented focus of this Conference, which I believe, will contribute to translating our will to fight anti-Semitism and intolerance into concrete political actions at all levels.

In the process of implementation of the decisions of the OSCE Ministerial Councils at Porto, Maastricht and Sofia, as well as commitments undertaken within the framework of the OSCE Conferences on issues of intolerance and discrimination, which took place in Berlin, Paris and Brussels in 2003-2004

Ukraine is aiming at further enhancement of its already well-developed system of legal and institutional protection of persons belonging to minorities, and improvement of existing instruments in order to foster environment free from discord, discrimination and intolerance.

We support and are ready to actively contribute to the ODIHR's efforts directed towards the strengthened role of law enforcement in preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to anti-Semitic and hate-motivated crimes. Ukraine commends endeavours of the ODIHR for setting-up the new Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Programme aimed at promoting inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue and confidence between States and peoples, which must be taught and practiced.

Mr. Chairman,

Historically, Ukraine has been the home for many ethnic and religious communities, whose roots and lives has been inseparably intertwined. Having experienced extreme horrors of the genocides of the Holocaust and Holodomor (artificial famine which took lives of 7 to 10 million of Ukrainians in the early 30s), World War II, forced relocations and deportations Ukraine and its people understand too well the dangers stemming from intolerance and discrimination for the society, as well as individual rights and freedoms.

The democratic and non-violent Orange Revolution that has united Ukrainians of all ethnic origins and confessions prescient in the country has proved once again their determination to ensure that further development of this country will see the reinforcement of the principles of inter-ethnic and inter-confessional harmony and tolerance.

At the same time we are confident that freedom of thought, conscience and expression, which became an integral part of the social life in Ukraine of today, does not include - in any way - a possibility to disseminate information and ideas infusing intolerance. The fact that those ideas sometimes assume the guise of the pseudo-scholarly discourse does not make them less dangerous and repulsive.

During his 23 May meeting in Kyiv with the leaders of the North American Jewish organizations President Viktor Yushchenko underscored that "there shall be no ground for xenophobia, anti-Semitism and interethnic animosity in Ukraine. We guarantee equal rights for all national minorities". He stated that the new administration will pay particular attention to ensuring necessary conditions for meeting spiritual, educational, cultural, and social needs of all ethnic and religious communities in Ukraine.

It is quite telling that the programme of the new Ukrainian Government "Towards the People" explicitly mentions equality and solidarity, inter-ethnic

and inter-confessional agreement, mutual respect and tolerance amongst the basic values underpinning its activities. We, in Ukraine share the view that the State bodies have the basic obligation and primary responsibility to protect the rights of persons belonging to minorities, effectively address any act of intolerance and discrimination – when necessary through the prompt legal action. It is vitally important that the State organs work in conjunction and partnership with the civil society actors.

Ukraine is ready to share its relevant good practices (for instance, in Holocaust education, elaboration of legislation on ensuring the rights of persons belonging to minorities, using mechanisms of inter-State co-operation for this purpose) and address the problems put on the agenda of this Conference in close inter-action with the OSCE, other international organizations and individual participating States. Let me stress on this occasion that adequate attention should be also given to the problems of xenophobia and discrimination aimed at growing migrant populations in Europe.

Here, in Cordoba, we have an opportunity and obligation to make a real difference in the lives of millions of people through our common action against intolerance, discrimination, hate motivated crimes, as well as by establishing a system of consistent education in tolerance, respect and mutual understanding: those values should constitute the foundation of our common and culturally diverse European home.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.