



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement to the Supplemental Human Dimension Meeting

As prepared for delivery by Chargé d’Affaires, a. i., Gary Robbins to the Supplemental Human Dimension Meeting on Prevention of Racism, Xenophobia and Hate Crimes through Educational and Awareness –Raising Initiatives

Vienna, November 10, 2011

First and foremost, the United States expresses its profound gratitude to Ms. Lawrence for joining us today. We commend her unrelenting determination and are inspired by her activism and advocacy for the victims of racially motivated violence and their families.

We have long advocated that the OSCE expand its efforts to bring attention to and to combat the spread of racism and xenophobia. We thank the Chairmanship in Office for taking the initiative to organize this Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting, which offers us the opportunity to address the increasing number of incidents of violence and prejudice against racial and ethnic minorities in the region.

As 2011 marks the International Year for People of African Descent, it is an opportune moment for us to consider how racial bias contributes to the spread of intolerance in the OSCE region. Thus, we were pleased to support ODIHR’s *Roundtable on the contemporary forms of racism and xenophobia affecting people of African Descent in the OSCE region*. We look forward to hearing from civil society on how efforts to eliminate the inappropriate treatment of those of African descent, including racial or ethnic profiling by law enforcement, can be better integrated into the OSCE’s efforts to promote tolerance work.

In the United States, people of African descent endured slavery, and have overcome a history of oppression, racism and bias to contribute —politically, economically, culturally, and in so many other ways—to the strength and success of the country. The contributions of Dr. Martin Luther King, to whom a monument was recently dedicated in Washington D.C., to the peaceful struggle for civil rights, garnered the Nobel Peace Prize and made him a role model around the world. The election of President Barack Obama smashed through a racial barrier that was still insuperable when he was born, in the period of the U.S. civil rights movement. There remains much work to be done, however, and as a national priority, the United States continues to cultivate tolerance and to battle prejudice. We believe that fighting racism and xenophobia not only corrects injustice in the treatment of peoples, but also fundamentally strengthens the nation, society, and the world as a whole.

We also use this opportunity to call on our OSCE partners to demonstrate the leadership and political will to promote—through both policy *and* action—tolerance in the OSCE region. While participating States have made numerous commitments to combat intolerance, many participating States have still not fully implemented these commitments, among other things, by failing to collect and report sufficient disaggregated data on hate crimes to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

We note with grave concern that there are in fact numerous participating States that have moved backward in combating intolerance, initiating laws and policies that run counter to a host of OSCE human rights commitments, including non-discrimination, freedom of movement, and religious freedom. Examples include the mass expulsions of Roma from several participating States, legislation banning Muslim religious attire, legislation banning ritual slaughter for Muslims and Jews, and policies that inappropriately criminalize irregular migration. We note also a worrying increase in Holocaust denial in many OSCE countries, and other forms of anti-Semitism.

We call on political leaders throughout the OSCE region to speak out against intolerance and racial discrimination and to develop national policies and strategies that will address the problem. President Obama has made it a priority for the U.S. government, in cooperation with civil society, to promote tolerance, and we look forward during this meeting to discussing with participants best practices that will ensure that all participating States meet their shared commitment to respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.