

OSCE Conference on Combating Discrimination and Promoting  
Mutual Respect and Understanding, Bucharest, 7 June 2007  
Opening plenary session  
Delegation of the Slovak Republic

We would like to thank the Romanian Government for hosting this important Conference, which gives us an excellent opportunity to discuss the follow up of the Cordoba Conference and also exchange views and best practices regarding the implementation of existing OSCE commitments in the field of tolerance and non-discrimination.

We see intolerance and discrimination as threats to overall security. We all know, that the European continent witnessed in its eventful history numerous tragic consequences of these phenomena. Unfortunately all our societies still have to face their different manifestations. That's why further coordinated efforts of governments and various international actors in combating discrimination and promoting tolerance are necessary. Slovakia supports continuous attention our Organization is paying to this field. Nevertheless activities of the OSCE and its bodies in this field should be better streamlined and more coordinated. We will support the Chairmanship in taking necessary measures.

Even though the role of the international and nongovernmental organizations in this field is important, the primary responsibility rests with participating states. It is duty of states to combat all forms of intolerance and to promote an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding.

I would like to use this opportunity to inform you about some concrete measures of Slovak government in this respect. Slovakia actively stands up against all manifestations of intolerance, racism, xenophobia and discrimination. We have adopted adequate legislative and organizational measures trying to eliminate these phenomena in the most efficient way and in accordance with the international standards and commitments.

The Slovak Constitution stipulates the prohibition of discrimination regardless of sex, race, color of skin, language, faith and religion, political affiliation or conviction, national or social origin, nationality or ethnic origin, property, birth or any other status. This prohibition has been continuously applied in concrete provisions in a number of legal regulations.

The Slovak Republic applies the principle of prohibition of discrimination. In 2004 the Slovak Parliament has adopted the so called “Antidiscrimination Law” with the aim to provide the protection against any form of discrimination and to guarantee the victims the possibility to claim for an adequate and efficient protection by court, including compensation of damages.

According to the Antidiscrimination Law the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights was created as specialized antidiscrimination body. Its task is to collect and provide upon request information, arrange legal aid to victims of discrimination and expressions of intolerance and prepare expert opinions concerning compliance with the principle of equal treatment.

Government of the Slovak Republic is implementing the approved Action Plan for the Prevention of All Forms of Discrimination, Racism, Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism and Other Expressions of Intolerance for the Period of 2006-2008 as a systemic tool for the prevention of and fight against intolerance and discrimination. This document is already the fourth Action Plan since 2000 and it builds on the achievements of previous measures. It aims inter alia at facilitating systemic and permanent attention to the issues of human rights compliance and prevention of discrimination in the individual sectors, as well as developing cooperation of ministerial departments with individual NGOs and other entities.

Concluding, let me express our confidence, that we will have a fruitful discussion and this Conference will be another stimulus for further OSCE activities in promoting tolerance and combating discrimination.

Thank you Mr. Chairman