



Statement
on Tolerance Conferences-Related Debate
under Any Other Business
delivered by Ambassador Jivan Tabibian
at the 554th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
May 5, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Since the subject of Conferences came up, what a good opportunity to say a few things about this process. I really beg the forgiveness of my Kazakh colleagues not to take anything I say as a comment on their specific proposal. I must say I have great sympathy with the views expressed by my American colleague on this subject. Here are the reasons why.

There is a difference between a beacon and a flashlight. I think what we should do is that of a beacon of a lighthouse, and not that of a flashlight of a traveling road-show year after year. I think the subject is critical, crucial and I believe that, surprisingly as it may be, in the last 2,5 years we have developed a body of reflection, program, recommendations, action items which we would be very proud of, if we were effectively to implement them and see the results. Unfortunately, we are not alone. But one thing about international organizations is that they gradually slide into conferencing as a substitute for action. No matter what field we look at in our commitments and from whatever institution, the first response is a conference. Once you get into a conference, the matter becomes, who holds/hosts it as a badge of honor and claim. I am really looking forward to the one this year.

However, I think the OSCE and the Permanent Council must take two decisions before we give anybody a false hope. First, are we going to continue to tackle this issue of discrimination by conferencing and if so, at what level and what type? Second, even if we decide it is a useful instrument, is it necessary to engage in a traveling road-show?

I think to launch it, we did very well going where we went, because the visibility, the public display, the media attention and the pleasure of in-the-field, immediate experience are important to jump-start an interest and a consciousness. However, I hope we do not become dependant on that road-show to turn the content of what we are supposed to do into implementation. I beg the Chairmanship to consider when and how, and I think it is proper that we do so after Cordoba, we consider the overall issue on the basis of which, if we find it useful, interesting, possible, affordable, before deciding where to go. And then we will take up whose offer makes more sense. But the tail should not wag the dog.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.