

**OSCE CONFERENCE ON TOLERANCE AND THE FIGHT AGAINST RACISM,
XENOPHOBIA AND DISCRIMINATION
(Brussels, 13-14 September 2004)**

**Session I: Legislative and Institutional Mechanisms and Governmental
Action, Including Law Enforcement**

STATEMENT

Allow me to start by thanking the Bulgarian Chairmanship and our Belgian hosts, as well as other contributors, for their dedicated efforts that have gone into organizing this Conference. We extend our full support to efforts aimed at making it a successful event.

Promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination in all international fora, including the OSCE is high on our national agenda. We attach particular importance to mobilizing efforts in countering racism, xenophobia and discrimination which are unfortunately on the rise in the OSCE area.

Turkey has actively participated in and contributed to all previous Conferences and events on tolerance and non-discrimination issues. We are pleased to note the high level participation and active involvement of governments, international organizations and the civil society in all these events. The distinguished gathering here today is yet another demonstration of the strong political resolve to address these important issues.

Today, I do not want to repeat all that we have said in depth earlier on many occasions. Our views and recommendations are available at length in the proceedings and concluding reports of previous events.

We believe it is high time now to translate our words into action. Efforts must be intensified especially at the national level to effectively combat racism, xenophobia and discrimination.

In the fight against these phenomena,

- incomplete anti-discriminatory legislation,
- discrepancies between law and practice,
- lack of access to and/or confidence in the law and judiciary,
- failure in identification or reporting of racist offences and impunity,
- racial or biased attitudes of civil servants and law enforcement,
- inadequate or discriminatory social policies allowing exploitation of unprotected vulnerable groups

remain to be among our main challenges. Legal and administrative actions so far taken in these areas should be further strengthened.

The elimination of racial discrimination could only be possible with the individual and collective determination and political will of all States. An effective response to racism, xenophobia and discrimination as well as anti-Semitism requires combined measures including legislation, human rights education and training, economic, social and cultural development measures.

We should, in the meantime, keep in mind that tolerance and non-discrimination is a matter of mentality. Ignorance is the very root cause of intolerance and intolerance is the source of racism, xenophobia and discrimination. Therefore, as medium and long-term measures against racism, xenophobia and discrimination we must ensure that the new generations should be brought up in a way which renders them fully aware of the threats posed by these phenomena.

Our most effective tool in this respect is -no doubt- education and training. Fight against racism in all its forms and manifestations, with special emphasis on concrete examples from history, must be included in all school curricula taking into account the age and specialization of the students. Similar courses must be incorporated also in professional training, for members of the judiciary and for law enforcement officers including customs personnel.

In conclusion, let me underline that intolerance is not a spontaneous attitude in the life of an individual or in society. It is a behavioural pattern acquired in time. So is tolerance. Addressing, in a systematic and rational manner, cultural, social, economic and political root causes of intolerance is therefore a crucial necessity.