



**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Turkey
Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting
19-20 April 2012, Vienna**

Session I: Racism, Intolerance and Discrimination: Contemporary Manifestations and Challenges

Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to warmly welcome all participants to the first Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting of the OSCE this year. Experiences and recommendations that will be submitted by the participants will help us explore the impact of racism, intolerance and discrimination across the OSCE region and identify ways and means to respond to these phenomena effectively.

I would also like to thank the Irish Chairmanship and ODIHR for organizing this meeting at a time when the need to address the manifestations of racism, intolerance and discrimination has become more pressing than ever as intolerance and discrimination against vulnerable groups have evolved and gained momentum in recent years.

As noted in various OSCE documents, these phenomena endanger the stability in the OSCE region, threaten the security of individuals and may give rise to wider-scale conflict and violence. That discrimination, intolerance, extremism and hatred on ethnic, religious and racial grounds constitute a great danger for societies is something that we have learned from history. Yet, manifestations of these behavioral disorders, including but not limited to those encountered in sports, have unfortunately reached a level that efforts for curbing these scourges may prove ineffective if not attended in particular by the resolve of civil society as well as policy makers through comprehensive responses.

A relevant question would perhaps be whether the OSCE has done enough in terms of formulating political commitments in addressing these problems. I should submit that the OSCE participating States have taken considerable steps towards making a remarkable set of

commitments, affirming their intent to ensure human rights and fundamental freedoms to everyone within their territory and subject to their jurisdiction, without distinction of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. We have clearly and unequivocally condemned manifestations of intolerance, racism, xenophobia and discrimination against anyone, and declared our firm intention to intensify the efforts to combat these phenomena in all their forms. Whether the set of commitments formulated so far is sufficient is something that merits discussion. Whether participating States have honoured their commitments effectively is another question that deserves focused attention.

I would like to stress various manifestations of intolerant prejudice against, and stereotypes of, vulnerable groups, in particular of Muslims and migrants, in public discourse. For more than a decade, Muslim communities have become targets of increased hostility across many countries in Europe. This trend has become more visible in particular in political rhetoric. Leading politicians have taken a fiercely negative position on Islam. The rise of far-right and extremist parties in many European states should be a grave concern for the prudent majority. Under the shield of free speech they demonize the religious and cultural values of Muslims, portraying them as a threat to the society they live in. And these efforts are coupled with immense economic problems widespread globally as well as media coverage of some sensitive issues driven by prejudice rather than professional impartiality. While the prudent majority of societies distance themselves from such hostile behaviors, mainstream politicians fail to speak out against hateful discourse for fear of losing votes.

Ownership is a key component of an effective fight against these phenomena. Unless civil societies act in accordance with dictates of their responsibility stemming from their ownership of the social problems, mainstream politicians, it seems, will continue to play into the hands of extremists. Civil society representatives should encourage the politicians to speak out against racism, discrimination and intolerance. Only civil society representatives can convince politicians that ignorance cannot earn them the votes far-rightists are already gaining through racist expressions and misuse of economic decline.

Thank you.