

**PERMANENT MISSION OF TURKEY
TO THE OSCE**

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**Statement by Ambassador Omur Orhun,
Permanent Representative of Turkey to the OSCE,
at the OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism
Vienna, 19-20 June 2003**

**(SESSION 2: THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN
PROMOTING TOLERANCE)**

Thank you Mr. Moderator,

Since this is the first time our Delegation is addressing the Conference on a national capacity, allow me to welcome the active involvement of such a large number of distinguished representatives from Parliaments and Governments of the participating States, as well as from international organisations and civil society institutions, in this timely and important event.

This interest in the Conference demonstrates the willingness and preparedness of Governments and civil society to work together to tackle all aspects of anti-Semitism.

On our account, Turkey is fully committed to the fight against racism, xenophobia, discrimination and anti-Semitism. Our millennium long experience on a land where countless cultures and religions co-existed throughout history helped building a culture of tolerance, which led to an exemplary conciliation and harmonisation among Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

Turkey's contribution to international efforts in the fight against anti-Semitism and other actions generated by racial and religious hatred is guided by this experience. Under this guidance, we initiated and hosted last year in İstanbul a joint forum of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and the European Union where Foreign Ministers and high level representatives from member, observer and associated countries of both organisations came together to explore means for promoting tolerance as well as inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue.

The forum reaffirmed its strong belief that cultures, in their diversity, complement and enhance one another. The main means to support coherence and solidarity and to avoid racial, religious and cultural prejudices was identified as the knowledge of one another through communication and cooperation for promotion of common universal values.

History has taught us that lack of mutual knowledge and respect among civilisations can greatly and adversely affect stability and peace. Harmony and welfare are nurtured when different peoples make communication a priority, taking time to express and listen to each other's views and interests, acknowledging and tolerating differences, while at the same time seeking out commonalities that can help build strong relationships that promote political and economic cooperation.

Only by strong political will and active involvement of the civil society, the desired level of respect and harmony can be achieved. Our primary tools in an effective long term strategy towards this end are education and media. Targeted education and awareness raising, not only at public

level, but also directed at politicians, media representatives, public officials and teaching staff is required. First step should be overcoming the existing prejudices towards one another. Eventually, tolerance, acceptance, respect for the other and inclusiveness should become part of our daily life and political practice.

These issues are being addressed under various sessions of this Conference. We hope our deliberations will yield constructive recommendations which will provide the OSCE and its participating States further guidance in the combat against racism, xenophobia, discrimination and anti-Semitism.