

**STATEMENT BY MR. VALERY ENGEL,
FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN
RIGHTS MOVEMENT WORLD WITHOUT NAZISM, AT THE
OSCE HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON TOLERANCE AND
NON-DISCRIMINATION (INCLUDING HUMAN RIGHTS YOUTH
EDUCATION ON TOLERANCE AND NON-DISCRIMINATION)**

Tirana, 21 and 22 May 2013

**Opening plenary session: Combating intolerance and discrimination in the
OSCE area. Implementation of the relevant OSCE commitments**

**Combating intolerance and discrimination against any person, including racism and
aggressive nationalism, in accordance with existing OSCE commitments**

Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished High-Level Conference participants,

Unfortunately, the situation today as regards discrimination and intolerance in the modern world is becoming alarming. Discrimination as a result of racism, aggressive nationalism and resurgent neo-Nazism in a number of countries is especially dangerous.

These phenomena are interlinked. Whereas racism preaches the superiority of certain races and aggressive nationalism preaches the primacy of the nation in the State-building process and ethnic, cultural and religious intolerance, neo-Nazism constitutes the quintessence of all these concepts since it preaches chauvinism, fascism, racism, xenophobia, homophobia and anti-Semitism, which it borrows from Nazi doctrine.

Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are actively countering these phenomena, among them the International Human Rights Movement World without Nazism which I represent and which today includes 138 organizations from 30 different countries. Our movement conducts regular monitoring of aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism in the OSCE area, with the exception of North America, and as of this year also including countries in Central Asia. We will soon issue an analytical report on the state of affairs in this regard in 2012.

As we see it, over the last decade throughout the world there has been a clear trend that to a considerable extent determines the movement towards aggressive nationalism and, in some cases, neo-Nazism as well. This poses a serious problem for the OSCE area too.

The rise in the number of radical nationalist groups, their growing ideological influence on the electorate, the increasing acceptance of radical nationalist groups, which is manifested in the large number of radicals coming to power (today there is practically no country left in Europe where parties holding nationalist values would not be represented in national or regional parliaments), and the glorification of Nazism to the level of State policy – these are all the realities of the present day.

The increasing activity of neo-Nazis and radical nationalists in Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Ukraine and many other countries may change the political picture not only there but also throughout Europe.

The high level of migrantophobia in Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Norway and Russia could cause serious social unrest.

We believe that the prevalence of radical nationalist and neo-Nazi sentiments and views is becoming one of the most serious challenges of the twenty-first century, threatening the principles of freedom and democracy in the modern world.

This does not only take the form of discrimination against minorities; neo-Nazi and radical nationalist organizations and political parties that openly glorify Nazism and the superiority of one race, religion or ethnic group over others provide a breeding ground for international terrorism.

Nowadays, hate crimes are recorded with alarming regularity on all continents. The scale and cynicism of some of these crimes have shocked the world. The mass killings in Norway of 22 July 2011, the shooting of Jewish children in Toulouse in March 2012, the terrorist attack in Boston on 15 April 2013 and a host of other high-profile crimes of the twenty-first century were committed by people who were in thrall to nationalist prejudices. Crimes against Roma continue. Despite the efforts being made by the European community, the situation of Roma and Sinti has not improved dramatically.

Neo-Nazism is knocking on the international community's door today, just as its predecessor did in the early 1930s. Not reacting to this, or even worse justifying it by making reference to freedom of speech and the right to march and demonstrate, is no longer an option for us.

No one is questioning the importance and sanctity of these rights, but society, and especially the young, must be protected against this Nazi poison, just as they are protected today against child pornography or drugs.

Therefore finding a balance between freedom of speech and assembly and the possibility for a State to restrict these freedoms so as to protect society against the dissemination of radical nationalist ideologies and views is becoming a serious problem. Without encroaching on freedom of speech, the authorities must send loud and clear signals to society when it comes to manifestations of neo-Nazism.

The absence of such signals means that in countries such as Hungary it has become possible to have a parliamentary debate on the role played by Jews in the development of the State, with a subsequent initiative by the For a Better Hungary party (*Jobbik*), which has

47 seats in parliament, to conduct a census of the Jewish population, ostensibly for national security purposes.

This has resulted in a surge in public anti-Semitism in Hungary, triggering a massive wave of Jewish emigration.

The failure of the State to intervene in the situation and even a well-disposed attitude towards neo-Nazi policies in Greece, primarily on the part of regional authorities and law enforcement bodies, has meant that neo-Nazi paramilitary formations have begun to drive immigrants out of the markets. Recently, on 10 May 2013 in Xanthi, radical nationalists carried out a massive arson attack on Roma homes.

Quite recently our movement held a round table in Torgau to commemorate the 68th anniversary of the meeting of Soviet and American troops at the River Elbe. Representatives from various anti-fascist organizations from Germany and more than ten other countries took part in that event. There was an exchange of views on how anti-fascists should respond to Nazi public events. The mayor of Torgau, Ms. Andrea Staude, described how, when the municipal court lifted a ban on the holding of a neo-Nazi demonstration, she personally urged the town's residents to go out on to the streets and prevent the neo-Nazis from holding their event. Thousands of people from this small German town heeded her call and prevented the demonstration from taking place.

Another example is Russia. It is one of the few countries where dozens of hate crimes are recorded each month and where anti-immigrant sentiments are increasing at an alarming rate. The authorities, while taking a tough stance on hate crimes (in March alone 40 persons were convicted of hate crimes, and 89 have been convicted in total since the start of the year), are nevertheless doing a great deal of campaign work to explain the danger posed by aggressive nationalism. For example, the National Policy Strategy of the Russian Federation has been adopted. This document defines the Russian nation as a community of citizens of the Russian Federation belonging to different ethnic, religious, social and other groups. NGOs fighting Nazism also receive support in Russia.

Recently, the president of our movement, Mr. Boris Spiegel, submitted a draft law to the State Duma of the Russian Federation on the inadmissibility of actions for the rehabilitation of Nazism, the glorification of Nazi criminals and their collaborators or the denial of the Holocaust. In accordance with this draft law, for the first time in Russian history Holocaust denial will be a criminal offence.

As can be seen from these cases, the degree to which nationalism is prevalent in most countries is largely determined by the position taken by society and the State.

However, the situation is considerably worse in those countries where nationalists are not only represented in parliament, but also in the ruling coalitions. The State institutions in those countries not only fail to counter aggressive nationalism but, quite on the contrary, work on turning nationalist initiatives into reality.

For example, upon entering the government, the All for Latvia! party (*Visu Latvijai*) began to wage a war against national minority schools and kindergartens, declaring its intention to introduce education in one language only – Latvian. Given that this party has been given the portfolios for minister of culture, minister of justice and a number of key

parliamentary committees, we cannot expect a serious response on the part of the Latvian Government.

If we take a look at the policy vis-à-vis minorities in these countries, we see that this policy is based on four principles:

- Division of the nation into titular people (people of that State) and non-titular people, with the titular population subsequently provided with certain advantages, and the glorification of Nazism with the aim of further dividing society along national lines;
- A legal basis for discrimination against the non-titular population for reasons not directly linked to nationalism or racism;
- Adoption of laws and decisions aimed at the assimilation of ethnic minorities;
- Widespread use of intelligence services to discredit human rights activists and exert pressure on those who hold different views, primarily among NGOs representing minorities.

For example, 20 years ago people in Estonia and Latvia were divided into citizens and non-citizens.

Non-citizens (14 per cent of the population of Latvia and 10 per cent of the population of Estonia) are members of ethnic minorities who have lived on the territory of these countries for several generations. They have been deprived of their political rights, are not allowed to take part in privatization measures and are prohibited from holding positions in the civil service or from working in certain business sectors, for example the pharmaceutical industry. In this way, a new national élite from among representatives of the titular ethnic groups are ensured priority position in the economy, the control of financial and natural resources, and suchlike.

In order to justify this policy in the eyes of the international community, it was argued that these people were the descendants of the Soviet occupiers, who had not been naturalized, and consequently it was necessary to class them, their children and their grandchildren as immigrants and grant them the right to undergo naturalization.

The international community gives no thought to the fact that these people have now been living in these countries for several generations and that it would be humiliating for them to undergo naturalization in their own country. The international community simply does not know, or has forgotten, that freedom of movement was virtually impossible within the Soviet Union, especially during the Stalinist period, and that the older generation of relatives of these people came to the Baltic States by no means voluntarily. Consequently, they too are victims of the Soviet incorporation of the Baltic States, albeit in a different way.

However, the fact is that non-citizens have been officially deprived of their civil rights not because they are members of national minorities but on the basis of the immigration status that was imposed on them against their will. What is more, in some Baltic States the authorities go for yet another deceptive measure – they simply exclude non-citizens from their reports on national minorities to international organizations, since in accordance with the reservations made by Estonia and Latvia, the Framework Convention for the Protection of

National Minorities applies only to citizens. Non-citizens simply do not exist on paper. Once they are classified as non-citizens, they are not considered as national minorities in these countries. And this involves some 400,000 people! On paper these people have even had their homeland seized – just give this some thought.

This is why, according to all the standards of international organizations, these countries' statistics look very good – on paper there are almost no regions in these countries with large ethnic minority communities and, accordingly, these countries are not required to meet their commitments to international organizations, for example, as regards the indication of place names in minority languages.

The glorification of Nazism also seeks to divide the nation. These glorification efforts create heroes for the national majority who are anti-heroes for minorities. If the Hitlerites and their henchmen represent enemies and anti-heroes for minorities, then it means they must be heroes for the majority.

Fascist collaborators are presented as heroes; monuments are erected to members of the SS. In the Latvian town of Bauska, for example, a monument was erected last year to honour the auxiliary police, who have on their hands the blood of Jews who perished in the Holocaust. What is more, for six years now the Jewish community has been refused permission to erect a memorial in that same town to the victims of Nazism.

The ceremonial reburial of the mortal remains of Juozas Ambrazevičius-Brazaitis, leader of the Provisional Government of Lithuania formed by the pro-Nazi Lithuanian Activist Front, took place last May in the presence of State officials. The Front collaborated with Nazi Germany's troops, and its statute contained a provision to the effect that "in restoring a new Lithuania, the Front intends to purge the Lithuanian nation immediately and thoroughly of Jews, parasites and monsters...". People are proposing that contemporary society should honour these "heroes" and educate the younger generation on the basis of these examples.

You are all very familiar with the annual SS marches in Estonia and Latvia. The latest news is that several days ago, anti-fascists who during an SS march in the streets of Riga switched on loudspeakers playing anti-fascist songs in memory of the prisoners who perished in the concentration camps and ghettos, were fined for playing their music too loudly. The neo-Nazis who snatched photographs of concentration camp prisoners from the hands of the anti-fascists have not been fined.

Amendments to the Citizenship Law will be promulgated in Latvia on 20 May. The concept of a State nation is being introduced, which according to the legislators includes only Latvians and Livonians. In this way, national minorities who have long been living in the country are already officially excluded from the concept of a State nation.

The problem of artificially dividing a nation in the interests of the titular majority is characteristic for many countries in the former Soviet Union, for example in Georgia, where the rights of the Armenian and Azerbaijani minorities living in large communities in Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti are being violated. This takes the form, primarily, of the expulsion of members of national minorities from senior positions in these regions under the pretext of their insufficient knowledge of the State language.

There is a similar situation in Kyrgyzstan, where on 13 December 2012 parliament adopted the Law on State Language at its first reading.

Nationalist ideology at the State level uses different instruments and mechanisms to discriminate against national minorities in these countries. These include removal of national minority languages from official communication, linguistic terror, systematic elimination of the education system in ethnic minority languages, which affects even kindergartens, elimination of media outlets in national minority languages, and discrimination against ethnic minority languages in place names, including places with a sizeable minority population.

It is no coincidence that quite recently a deputy from one of Latvia's nationalist parties in the European Parliament, Mr. Krišjānis Kariņš, said: "We need the Russians who grow up here to grow up as Latvians. Yes, of course, politically speaking this is a heretical idea. We need to understand that integration leads to assimilation. And this should be our goal – to assimilate their children."

In Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Turkmenistan and a number of other countries, State higher education in national minority languages has been virtually eliminated, although the percentage of national minorities in these countries ranges from 20 to 44 per cent.

In Moldova and a number of other countries, advertising in national minority languages has been banned, and in Moldova media outlets working in a language other than Moldovan are being closed down. In particular, a private television channel with national coverage broadcasting predominantly in Russian was closed in Moldova in April 2012.

In Turkmenistan, the number of hours for the study of Russian has been reduced tenfold. Since 1995, all institutions of higher education in the country have switched to instruction exclusively in the Turkmen language, and consequently people who do not speak Turkmen have been deprived of the opportunity to receive higher education.

In Latvia, and recently in Estonia too, teaching in the Russian language at national minority schools has been cut by 60 per cent. What is more, no one even bothered to ask the students themselves or their parents. There were also massive protests, which were ignored by the authorities. An attempt to switch to the State language in kindergartens is resulting in separate protests.

Relatively new instruments of forced assimilation in these countries are the language inspections, which, using the fieldwork method, monitor the situation regarding the use of the State language in the workplace and, what is more, not only in State institutions but also in the private sector. In other words, it is not the market that determines whether businesses using national minority languages in their operations survive, but special State inspections, acting as a sort of language police.

Clearly, nationalist policies are unacceptable not only from the point of view of human rights violations, but also because they lead to greater tension within society and result in inter-ethnic conflicts. It is also extremely dangerous when under these conditions representatives of the titular nation feel that they are superior and frequently provoke clashes with national minorities through their arrogant and aggressive attitude.

How some States are endeavouring to limit the opportunity to fight for the rights of ethnic minorities warrants separate study. With increasing frequency we encounter the persecution of national minority rights activists and anti-fascists, along with the eradication of any kind of dissent. Does this not suggest to you certain historical parallels? It was, in fact, Nazi ideology that made repression and the destruction of “inferior” races and ethnic groups as well as anti-fascists State policy in the twentieth century.

Criminal proceedings have been instituted against two Russian school activists (Oleg Besedin and Alisa Blintsova) who were protesting against the switch to instruction in the Estonian language. They are facing fabricated charges of forging their own signatures on a statement regarding the instruction of their children in an ethnic minority language at school.

In the annual Estonian Internal Security Service report for 2012, the NGO Russian School, which brings together defenders of the Russian language in Estonia, was presented as an organization threatening the constitutional order of the country.

Anti-fascist organizations and their activists are subject to particular pressure in Estonia, such as trumped-up charges of undermining national security because they defend the rights of “war criminals”, which is what Estonia calls Soviet partisans convicted of fighting against Nazism. We can observe a similar picture in Latvia and, to some degree, in Lithuania.

The situation is such that intelligence services in these countries believe it possible to impose their opinion on society as to what position NGOs should take on particular issues. This is blatant pressure on civil society, a throwback to the Soviet past, a relic from the totalitarian era and arbitrary action on the part of intelligence services, all of which is incompatible with the principles of democracy and the separation of power, and with the role of the executive authorities and intelligence services in particular.

A recent example of pressure on human rights activists and anti-fascists is the case brought against the Latvian journalist Andrey Khramtsov by the security police. On Victory Day, 9 May, he went to the monument to the liberators and began to question passers-by as to their views on the prohibition of Soviet symbols in Latvia. The intelligence services instituted criminal proceedings against the journalist under Article 225 of the Latvian Criminal Law – organization of mass riots and provocation.

On 29 April, without any reasons being given, Alexander Knyazev, a Russian citizen and human rights commissioner of our organization well known for speaking out against the discrimination of national minorities in Kyrgyzstan, was prevented from entering that country, where he is temporarily resident.

In Lithuania, for instance, one should not have an opinion that deviates from the official line. Otherwise, a person risks criminal prosecution. The human rights activist Algirdas Paleckis has received a conviction for having questioned live on air whether Soviet soldiers had shot at innocent civilians in 1991. He believes that this was provocation by Popular Front fighters. He has now been convicted of denying the Soviet occupation, although in actual fact this is clearly punishment for being a political opponent and a flagrant violation of freedom of speech. The very notion of the Soviet occupation of Lithuania has so far not been proven by single international court.

Several people who claimed that the shots did not come from where the Soviet military contingent was stationed spoke out in Paleckis' defence. Today they are being prosecuted for making false statements.

Unfortunately, real arrests and fabricated criminal cases continue. For example, in June 2012 the human rights activist and journalist Hilal Mamedov was arrested in Baku. He is well known as one of the activists defending the rights of the Persian-speaking Talysh, who see themselves as part of the Azerbaijani nation but wish to preserve their ethnocultural identity. Hilal Mamedov was charged with drug possession, spying for Iran over a period of 20 years, and also inciting national, religious and even racial hatred. Mamedov has been subjected to physical coercion in prison.

Are we dealing with human rights violations in these countries? Does the rise in radical nationalist and Nazi sentiments pose a serious danger to democracy? We are certain that the answer is yes. What are we to do, then, in this case? What are needed here are joint, co-ordinated efforts by NGOs, international organizations and the governments of the world's leading democratic countries. Unfortunately, there are as yet no effective mechanisms that can force a State to respect human rights. Our only weapon is openness and moral support from international organizations and individual politicians who share our concern.

Greater attention needs to be paid in the OSCE to combating aggressive nationalism, xenophobia and racism. The OSCE institutions – the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media – along with the three Special Representatives should speak out against all these negative situations.

I believe that it would be worth holding a separate OSCE event on this problem and sharing experience in combating these phenomena.

During the present Conference and this Session, we need to discuss a number of important questions:

- What characterizes the manifestations of racism, xenophobia, aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism in the various OSCE countries?
- What preventive measures can and should a State take against the proliferation of such radical ideologies and movements?
- What role do political leaders, civil society and the media play?
- To what degree are restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly permissible to protect society against the proliferation of neo-Nazism?
- How do we ensure that society and the young reject nationalist and neo-Nazi ideologies?
- What role do international organizations play in combating these negative phenomena?

History, including the history of Nazism in Germany, teaches us that Nazism can be prevented in two ways: preventive efforts by the international community and the rejection within society of aggressive nationalism, racism and religious intolerance – everything that creates the conditions for the formation of a neo-Nazi perception of the world, primarily amongst the young.

A few weeks ago in Torgau our organization agreed on an Anti-Nazi Charter – an international declaration of the fundamental principles that underlie the common goals and principles of countering racism, xenophobia, radical nationalism, religious hatred and neo-Nazism. It has been posted on our website – www.stopnazism.net – and will soon be open for signature. Its goal is a world without Nazism, aggressive nationalism and hatred.

We are not so naive as to believe that we can conquer neo-Nazism in this way, but we do believe that the more people who share our principles, the fewer chances there will be for those who believe that one race, religion or ethnic group has more rights in the world than all the others.