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RECHERCHES ET D'ETUDES DES SCIENCES SOCIALES ET  
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TOLERANCE AND NON-DISCRIMINATION (INCLUDING HUMAN  
RIGHTS YOUTH EDUCATION ON TOLERANCE AND  
NON-DISCRIMINATION)**

Tirana, 22 May 2013

**Plenary session 5: The role of human rights youth education in promoting  
mutual understanding and respect for diversity in accordance with the  
existing OSCE commitments**

Mr. Chairperson,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Our country, Belgium, is going through a complex period where the very foundations of our democracy and the preservation of fundamental rights are threatened. During his end-of-year speech, our King made an exceptional address, drawing attention to the drift that threatens our unity and cohesion. We must remain alert in order to preserve our social model, the product of painful historical experiences.

In this context, we have taken due note of the activities of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, *inter alia* in educating young people about hate crime. We are committed to supporting a training session in Brussels on this issue in order to pursue these awareness-raising efforts.

Furthermore, the major issue of intolerance and discrimination against Muslims is not linked to ignorance about Islam or of Muslims, and organizing activities that are mainly focused on interfaith or intercultural dialogue will not allow us to combat Islamophobia. It is a new form of xenophobia that needs to be seen as racism and stringently tackled within the human rights framework. This is why the Guidelines for Educators on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims are a high-quality tool. We call upon the Belgian authorities to promote it within our national education system and during training sessions for the public authorities.