

BUCHAREST DECLARATION

By the Chairman-in-Office

Distinguished Delegates,

Let me sum up the proceedings of this Conference on Combating Discrimination, Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding, follow-up to the Cordoba Conference on Anti-Semitism and on Other Forms of Intolerance, in what I would like to call

“Bucharest Declaration”

Based on consultations, I understand that OSCE participating States,

Are aware that, more than sixty years after the end of World War II, the OSCE region still mourns the tens of millions of people who lost their lives as victims of war, the Holocaust, religious intolerance, occupation and acts of repression,

Note that in this generation too, Europe has experienced the horrors of ethnic cleansing, and acts of racial, ethnic, and religious intolerance continue to cast a shadow over their region,

Reiterate their common understanding that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law is at the core of the OSCE comprehensive concept of security and declare that acts of violence stemming from intolerance and discrimination pose a threat to democracy and security in the OSCE region and beyond and cannot be justified on any ground,

Stand committed today to reject any attempts to justify these practices, and have gathered in this Conference to sustain and strengthen efforts to foster tolerance, mutual respect and understanding, building on the 2005 Cordoba Conference on Anti-Semitism and other forms of Intolerance and on previous tolerance related conferences,

Have reviewed the status of implementation of OSCE commitments on intolerance in order to highlight ways to make progress, and to focus on best practices,

Emphasize the importance of legislation, law enforcement, data collection and monitoring of hate crimes, education and constructive public discourse in order to effectively combat all forms of discrimination,

Have committed themselves, as participating States in the OSCE, to ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for everyone within their territory and subject to their jurisdiction and to provide to all persons equal and effective protection of law,

Have also committed themselves to raise awareness of the value of cultural and religious diversity as a source of mutual enrichment of societies and to recognize the importance of integration with respect for cultural and religious diversity as a key element to promote mutual respect and understanding,

Condemn all forms of racism, aggressive nationalism and ethnic cleansing and recall their commitment to counteract the existence or emergence of racism or aggressive nationalism in and between their societies, and strive to ensure that attempts to commit genocide are prevented today and in future,

Take into account that all the world's great religions are committed to advocate mutual respect and understanding and recall the importance of promoting and facilitating open and transparent interfaith and intercultural dialogue and partnerships towards tolerance, mutual respect and understanding and stand committed to ensuring the freedom of individuals to profess and practice a religion or belief of their choice, alone or in community with others,

Recall the contribution of the OSCE to the report of the High Level Group of the UN Alliance of Civilizations initiative and looking forward to UN action on the report with a view to considering an appropriate OSCE contribution towards its implementation,

Recognize that all manifestations of discrimination and intolerance threaten the security of individuals and societal cohesion,

Have reviewed the situation in the OSCE region, and condemn without reservation racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance and discrimination, including against Christians, Jews and Muslims and members of other religions. Condemn also harassment and incitement to hate crimes motivated by race, colour, sex, language, religion or belief, political or other opinion, national or social origin, or birth or other status. Reiterate that racism, xenophobia, discrimination or religious intolerance can never be justified, particularly due to political motivation. In this regard, the participants in the conference strongly reaffirmed their existing OSCE commitments in this field as well as their determination to fulfil them,

Recognizing its unique and historic character, condemn anti-Semitism without reservation, whether expressed in a traditional manner or through new forms and manifestations. Reiterate previous OSCE declarations that international developments or political issues, including in Israel or anywhere else, can never justify anti-Semitism,

Condemn, without reservation, acts of intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in the OSCE region, and reiterate their commitment to combat this phenomenon that will be the subject of a CiO Conference in Cordoba next October,

Condemn, without reservation, discrimination, harassment and violence against Christians and members of other religions, including minority religions, which continue in the OSCE region, reiterate their commitment to fight against this, and reaffirm the right of individuals to practice the religion of their choice,

Stress that acts of violent intolerance by groups of fanatics cannot be used to blame and consequently discriminate against entire communities, be they Christians, Jews, Muslims or members of other religions,

Reaffirm their commitments to tolerance and mutual respect and understanding, and recognize the need to counter ideologies of violence. In this regard, they completely reject the identification of terrorism and extremism with any religion, culture, ethnic group, nationality or race and recall that terrorism cannot be justified on any ground,

Underscore that the primary responsibility for addressing acts of intolerance and discrimination rests with participating States, including their political leaders. Recognize the importance of implementation, through competent authorities of participating States, of the commitments agreed to by the Ministerial Councils in Porto, Maastricht, Sofia, Ljubljana and Brussels,

In particular, reaffirm today their previous commitment to collect and maintain reliable information and statistics about hate motivated crimes, and to follow closely incidents motivated by racism, xenophobia or other intolerance,

Also recall the importance of enacting and implementing legislation and law enforcement as essential tools to combat hate crimes and violent manifestations of intolerance and discrimination. Authorities of participating States have a key role to play in ensuring the adoption and implementation of such legislation and the establishment of effective monitoring and enforcement measures to monitor that legislation's ongoing effect,

Aware of the need to ensure more effective participation of Roma and Sinti in pluralistic societies, re-commit themselves to implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area,

Recall the commitment to encourage the development of methods and curricula for tolerance education, including education on the Holocaust and anti-Semitism and fighting prejudice, intolerance and discrimination against Christians, Jews and Muslims and members of other religions,

Underline that free and independent media is also essential in countering misperceptions and prejudices and promoting tolerance through awareness-raising and educational programmes, as well as highlighting positive contribution of cultural and religious diversity to society,

Note with deep concern racist, xenophobic and discriminatory public discourse. Stress that political representatives can play a positive role in the overall promotion of mutual respect and understanding and have a significant impact in defusing tensions within societies by speaking out against hate-motivated acts and incidents, while continuing to respect the freedom of expression,

Recognize the contribution made so far by the three Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office in support of the overall effort of the OSCE to combat discrimination and promote tolerance, mutual respect and understanding,

Acknowledge the essential role that national parliaments play in the enactment of the necessary legislation as well as serving as a forum for national debate, and the work done by the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE in raising awareness in the implementation of the existing OSCE commitments in the field of tolerance and non discrimination,

Appreciate the work done by the relevant OSCE structures, in particular the ODIHR, in assisting participating States, upon request, in implementing their existing commitments in the field of tolerance and non-discrimination,

Also recognise that civil society continues to be a key partner in the fight against discrimination and intolerance, and that enhanced communication and dialogue between participating States and civil society can advance implementation of commitments and operational follow up at national and international levels.

Must rise to the challenges of their era and find effective ways to promote a culture of mutual respect, understanding and equality in all of their countries. In doing so, must also engage with and mobilize young people and youth organizations.

Bucharest, 8th June 2007