

**Statement of
Rep. Alcee L. Hastings, President of OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
to
Conference on Tolerance and the Fight Against Racism, Xenophobia
and Discrimination**

(Brussels, 13 September 2004)

I would like to thank Chairman Passy, His Royal Highness, His High Holiness and the Belgian Government for hosting this conference.

It is unfortunate that changes in our society dictate that we must gather to discuss what should be commonplace in society. But, it is crucially important to have this dialogue since it is not.

- Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948 suggests “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood,” and sisterhood.
- This basic premise is the underlying concept of *every* human rights system in the world. However, it is the blatant, unabashed disregard of this premise that brings us to the table today and everyday until we are all free.
- While we all embrace and welcome the benefits and advances of globalization we must also embrace the diversity that occurs when worlds, people, and cultures come together.
- We all inhabit this incredible sphere called earth and it is our hope that one day we will do so without fear or prejudice but this hope is not yet fulfilled.
- The phenomena of xenophobia, racism, anti-Semitism, discrimination and religious intolerance and human trafficking permeate all our societies. It is complex in nature, but this is no new global occurrence. Xenophobia, the hatred or intolerance of otherness is as old as humanity itself.

- Today, few States are racially, ethnically, or religiously homogenous Ethnic conflict and tensions are pandemic in many OSCE regions and beyond. Globalization and technology has brought about increased human mobility and migration.
- Although racism and xenophobia occurrences and manifestations are varied from region to region, its affects are the same.

Be it the United States, Russia, Germany or the Balkans, human rights atrocities abound and must be eradicated.

- The U. N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, defined genocide as calculated efforts to destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group in whole or part. This definition can be applied to all of the issues we are discussing here at this Conference.

I commend Secretary Powell for declaring the human annihilation and eradication in the Sudan as genocide. The thousands that have been raped, starved and killed are proof of our need for increased participation in not just OSCE regions, but others as well.

- The international community has made great strides in the fight against these socially crippling intolerances. Laws have been enacted and numerous international human rights instruments have been adopted.
- The OSCE Assembly each year has adopted resolutions and declarations, most recently at the Edinburgh Session, where I was elected President of the Parliamentary Assembly.
- In Paragraph 64, of the Edinburgh Declaration, we declare, harmonious relations and confidence between individuals of different cultural backgrounds are a prerequisite for social stability and domestic and international integration and of particular importance on this connection is an ongoing, constructive and balanced dialogue between the authorities and the representatives of national minorities.

Last week, I met with Secretary of State Colin Powell to discuss the observation of the American elections. I am pleased that the Parliamentary Assembly will lead the OSCE's observation mission to insure the protection of the rights of all voters.

- During the Berlin Conference on anti –Semitism, there was much discussion about the need for the Chairman in Office to appoint a special envoy to address the issues of anti-Semitism in the OSCE regions. I support this idea and hope the Bulgarian Chair and the incoming Slovenia Chair will make this a reality.

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has and will continue to condemn any acts of intolerance that undermines or impedes the processes of peace and security in the OSCE area.

- Acculturation is our desire
- Stability and peace is our mission
- Love of humanity is our mandate
- Mankind has intrinsically at its core the undeniable need to belong, to identify with others that are like minded, that speak the same language, or look the same. In the 1970's the late Henri Tajfel, Ph.D, of the University of Bristol in England and John Turner, Ph.D, now of the Australian National University, in their *social identity theory* concluded that we also have a need to think highly of ourselves. One way of elevating one's own self-esteem is by denigrating the attributes of another.
- Mustapha Ataturk, the founder of Turkey, was so poignant and profound in his thoughts and observations of the world. He understood that we aren't just citizens of the geographic place and space that we occupy, we are first and foremost citizens of the world and we should therefore engage in making that our defining identity.
- Nationalistic narcissism has no place in our countries. Not American or Turk or Muslim or Jew. Not Sinti or Roma. Just citizens of the world.
- Racism, discrimination, intolerance, anti Semitism all stem from fear, unawareness and a lack of knowledge. It is this ignorance of diversity that must be combated.
- Education and Legislation is our only hope, if we are ever to achieve tolerance, respect and mutual understanding. We must eliminate the fears of the unfamiliar and the unknown.
- As stated in this conference's agenda, if education is to enable both individuals and society as a whole to develop the skills to address future challenges, it is essential that it promotes tolerance and an appreciation of diversity. The promotion of respect for each individual's cultural, religious or ethnic identity within a context of social integration is an indispensable part of the educational process.

Inter-cultural education must begin being taught in educational institutions, religious centers, and most importantly, stressed in the media and within legal systems.

- There must be a consensus in every society to abide by basic rules of civility. The basic rights of fair and equitable treatment of human beings must be observed in a pluralistic community. In order for there to be security and positive development, we must have substantive engagement and look on our perceived differences with welcoming eyes.

Cultural and ethnic fusion should take place in our regions seamlessly.

And finally, comprehensive policies with greater transparency in function must be developed and enacted. And the consequences of violations enforced.

- Information should be fair, understandable and accessible. We can not allow the institutionalization of discrimination to block barriers to life's necessities such as shelter, food, employment and other social welfare to be based on fear, or lack of knowledge or prejudicial attitudes.

Such policies against the integration of human beings into are societies can not be readily reconciled with universally declared principles of equality and acceptance of diversity.

J. M. Vorster, in his analyzes writes, and I paraphrase:

- It seems that racism and xenophobia will occupy ethical, political, and sociological reflection for quite some time to come. In the process of dealing with these pressing issues, it is vitally important to keep in mind that mechanisms such as education and social integration are of no use if it does not create a sensitivity and desire for tolerance and respect for others. But tolerance and respect are of no use if they do not lead to the recognition of rights. And rights are of no use if they cannot be applied legally and effectively, in order to protect and empower the victims of racism and xenophobia.

This is our challenge and our charge to keep.