

**OSCE Conference on Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination.
Vienna 4 september 2003**

Statement by the Norwegian Delegation

Session 2

Mr. Chairman,

This Conference on Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination is a very welcome initiative. There is every need for all of us to look at ways and means to combat these problems. In Norway we have come to realise that our legislation is in need for revision in order to strengthen legal protection against racism and discrimination. The fact is that Norway currently has no general rule of law prohibiting ethnic discrimination, only individual provisions prohibiting discrimination in specific areas. In 2000 the Government therefore established a law commission to consider legal amendments. The commission forwarded its proposal to the Government last year, and we are now in the process of developing new legislation. The aim is for the Government to forward one single bill on prohibiting ethnic discrimination to the Parliament in 2004.

In the preparatory work on such a bill we have drawn on the set of standards being adopted by the EU Member States concerning racism and ethnic discrimination. Relevant EU directives lists standards in these areas. The result of the process in Norway of developing new legislation will, as I mentioned, be one single act prohibiting ethnic discrimination, and it will be built on the concepts of discrimination incorporated in the EU directives. Consequently, both direct and indirect discrimination will be prohibited, along with harrasment. The Government will propose a shared burden of proof, and efficient civil sanctions. A system of law enforcement, consisting of specialized bodies will also be proposed.

The Norwegian Government decided in 1998 to establish a centre for Combatting Ethnic Discrimination. This centre has built up a solid foundation of experience and knowledge. It carries out important work in documenting discrimination and it submits proposals on how to strengthen the protection against ethnic discrimination. The centre's tasks and functions will also be addressed in the draft bill on ethnic discrimination.

The Norwegian Delegation recommends that the OSCE Participating States adopt national legislation prohibiting both direct and indirect discrimination, establishing a shared burden of proof and efficient sanctions and enforcement procedures. We also recommend that all states establish specialised bodies safeguarding ethnic equality.

Thank you.