

ENGLISH only

Keynote speech plenary session 5

The role of education to promote mutual understanding and respect for diversity according to OSCE commitments

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Ladies and gentlemen,

It's an honour for me to have the opportunity of addressing few words to this very respectable auditory this morning. I would like to thank the OSCE this opportunity.

I have no more than 10 minutes to offer to you some ideas for the debate on the role of education to promote mutual understanding and respect for diversity according to OSCE commitments, so let's start.

Human dimension stays one of the current chairmanship's uttermost priorities. As told Mr. Dieter Boden, "Kazakhstan has good reputation and experience in the sphere of interethnic and inter-confessional concord. A big number of ethnic groups are peacefully living in the republic now and it is an outstanding achievement of policy of tolerance. Moreover, Kazakhstan is an illustrative example in this light for many countries, including Balkans and Caucasus. I am sure that this experience of interethnic and inter-confessional accord and non-discrimination will help Kazakhstan in regulation and settlement of problem situations".

From my point of view there are three essential issues we could face. First of all, what is education and who are their agents? In second place, we have to know the limits of the school in order to "teach" tolerance. Thirdly, we also must know the possibilities, the instruments of the school in this field. Here I'll explain two examples. I'll offer a brief conclusion at the end of my intervention, before your valorous comments.

As President Nazarbayev told at the beginning of the OSCE Kazakh Chairmanship, there are four priorities: the so called **four T** ("Trust", "Tradition", "Transparency" and "Tolerance"). Those, reflect expectations of the countries –partners in the best way possible".

As academic but also as an active part of civil society in my country, I follow with deep concern some events in Spain. I wonder for the origin of violence in Western societies as teacher of Polemology (the study on conflicts), and a key point is the defamation of religion (including religious beliefs, stigmatization of concrete kind of people or conducts based on religion,...) made by my Government¹ or TV series, TV entertainment shows, or even *mass media* (newspapers, Internet, TV news, films,...).

Like recognize an ODIHR document, “Hate crime and hate speech are connected. While a direct relationship can rarely be proven, hate-motivated violence frequently occurs in the context of hateful speech. Organized hate groups express their views through publications, popular music, the Internet and public demonstrations. These seek to normalize and legitimize hate speech and hate crimes”².

The Pope Benedict XVI stated in January 2009: “I also express my hope that, in the Western world, prejudice or hostility against Christians will not be cultivated simply because, on certain questions, their voice causes disquiet”³.

However, I’m convinced that if you have been educated in such way, the pressure of that hostile environment will not produce a more intolerant society but you’ll have the proper instruments to answer the intolerance and the defamation with the truth. If you have received the vaccine, you don’t have to be afraid of that illness.

I have been working in Spain fighting intolerance and discrimination, teaching Human Rights. I can say that’s a very difficult task; not because it is natural to be intolerant, underlining the differences between the many nationalities or ethnic groups, but because the age. Pupils between thirteen and seventeen see the differences not as an opportunity of enrichment but an opportunity to ridicule the other. Glasses, stature, weightness, acne,...

¹ “Me parece, como siempre, que no saben cuál es su lugar”. Elena Salgado, 18th June 2009. “Los obispos son unos hipócritas”, José Blanco, 18th June 2009. See more on www.oadir.org.

² *Preventing and responding to hate crimes: A resource Guide for NGOs in the OSCE Region*. p. 53.

³ *Udienza al corpo diplomatico accreditato presso la Santa Sede per la presentazione degli auguri per il nuovo anno*, 08.01.2009.

everything is an element for distinction, discrimination and cruelty. And they have to learn to avoid those attitudes and appreciate the opposite: the other is not an enemy but my ally.

We are starting now (since the 1970's-80's) to see in EU member States people from other different countries, so until recently we didn't have any problem to integrate the different nationalities or ethnic groups. We have in Kazakhstan a model of convivence between 140 different ethnic groups. How is done this integration? Obviously trough education, but also through some initiatives like the *World and Traditional Religion Congress* (personal initiative of Presidnet Nazarbayev) or even this OSCE High Level Conference. Without these good instruments, this country would suffer a disgusting ethnic civil war.

As underlined by **journalist Christopher Robbins**, "Adherence to and promotion of tolerance, peace and accord are the pillars of the state policy, the core of social development fixed constitutionally by the young republic right after its declaration of independence. Over 18 years Kazakhstan has been consistently promoting constructive interaction among various cultures and succeeds in making concrete decisions in this direction within various international organizations".

I thought Nazism was a thing that belonged to the past, old past. But we cannot ignore that the key points of that system of thinking, of that ideology, are based on an anthropology which is nowadays very active. Today, in my country, you can find many people that cannot say what a human being is, when he or she starts to live, etc. There are wrong conceptions on the human nature that justify aberrations. These concepts guided Germany to the Holocaust. Be careful, my friend, or we will be perpetrating such crime, such genocide. Many authors have noticed that (Dalmacio Negro Pavón, George Lucas, among others).

Every year, during my lessons, I make the next experiment: I asked my pupils for the Nazi regime, for the Holocaust, etc. They refuse such things. But they don't know why they have to oppose those episodes. Just they hate Nazism. This is the evidence they have received propaganda, not education.

Education must imply the pupil, must make the pupil to assume the proper attitude towards those crimes. Education is to make the pupils find out the Truth inside themselves (like Socrates or Plato) and to motivate them to live in accordance with it.

We all have heard sentences like “Education is the future of society”; “Education is the basis of our future options, of our way of life and pacific coexistence”. All of them are right, but not every kind of education is valid in the field of tolerance.

We have to teach that there is a human nature, universal, common to every human being, that there are appropriate things in our life and wrong options. Although every OSCE state has a different situation, we can say something common for all of them: education is a key instrument to fight against intolerance and discrimination.

Theory is necessary, but not enough. Readings and films are good support material, but not enough. Workshops are the best way our pupils can play roles they are not used to and they can reflect on them; but they are not enough. Theory, readings, workshops; all three together are necessary but not the key point. Good materials are not enough, but a good teacher, a good professor is essential. That’s enough. The best instrument for teaching tolerance and respect are the teachers, their strong commitment with tolerance and their lives.

In order to end my intervention, I would like to underline those words that we can find at the *Helsinki Document* (1992), in the number 12: “Economic decline, social tension, aggressive nationalism, intolerance, xenophobia and ethnic conflicts threaten stability in the CSCE area [...] Freedom and tolerance must be taught and practised”. Education is not a dispensable issue but a necessary one for our own security.

Finally, I would like to make 4 recommendations:

- 1.- To review the textbooks and eliminate every trace of intolerance against religions.

2.- To call to Governments not to make statements on religious approaches or opinions, just to say NO COMMENTS.

3.- To call mass media not to show religions as the cause of all evils in society nor the cause of lack of progress.

4.- Let the families choose freely the moral education for their children and not be imposed to them by State, even in public schools.

Thanks for your attention. I hope these few words can offer you some land for the debate.

Thank you!