

ENGLISH only



**Mediterranean Seminar  
Combating intolerance and discrimination and promoting mutual respect  
and understanding**

**Civil Society Preparatory Meeting**

**Tel Aviv, 17 December 2007**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

We welcome the opportunity of discussing issues pertaining to combating intolerance and promoting mutual respect and understanding and formulating recommendations for the participating States and the Mediterranean Partners for co-operation as well as for the OSCE institutions.

Regretting the absence of NGOs from many Mediterranean partner States, we recommend that the OSCE shall facilitate dialogue between civil society actors from the OSCE region and from the Mediterranean partner States for co-operation.

**Working group 1: The role of women in promoting mutual respect and understanding and in countering intolerance and discrimination**

- Having discussed the issue that the mentioning of religion in constitutions can have negative effects on human rights.
- Noting that economic independence is a prerequisite for women to become involved in the fight against intolerance,

We recommend

**To the OSCE**

- Encourage and support women's NGOs and their work in the area of tolerance across the OSCE region and its Mediterranean partner States.
- Facilitate dialogue between women's NGOs and governments.

### **To participating States**

- We encourage participating States to take seriously the possibility of opening and continuing dialogue with the Mediterranean partner States about the role of women in society, in particular in the area of promoting mutual respect and understanding.
- We believe that women in high-level political positions can have significant impact on the culture of public debate and on the discourse of human rights, mutual respect and understanding. Therefore, we call upon participating States to involve female leaders in the struggle against intolerance and discrimination by drawing on their knowledge and experience, incl. by convening a conference of female leaders committed to the fight against intolerance and discrimination.
- Noting that female leaders are still an exception, we call upon States to create structures, legal instruments and political mechanisms that enable women to get involved in the combat against intolerance and discrimination, incl. by ensuring that women are represented in parliaments, governmental institutions and all other official structures;
- Introduce special gender advisors at all levels of government, incl. the local level, to engage with the causes of gender inequality;
- Introduce liaison officers in Ministries who can provide for a constant dialogue with civil society on the issues of tolerance and non-discrimination.
- Empower women to get involved in improving relations between the majority and minorities;
- Translate the lessons learnt from the combat against gender inequality to the combat against other forms of inequality, incl. by facilitating the exchange of experiences of dealing with intolerance and discrimination at all levels of society and also between countries;
- Allocate funding to create special programs to reach out to girls and women in deprived communities and ensure basic quality education for girls and young women, providing for their access to computers and technology.
- Mainstream gender issues in society in general and particularly in education to promote respect and mutual understanding;
- Facilitate and support the efforts of women from migrant communities in the OSCE region and the Mediterranean partner States to organize themselves and stand up against patriarchy and discrimination.
- Develop tools to assist migrant women living in two different cultures without obliging them to renounce one of these cultures;
- Integrate religious leaders in the struggle for women's equal rights and encourage them to speak out against oppression and intolerance and for equality.
- Apply the rule of law strictly in any case of bias crime against women and other minorities.

### **To civil society**

- Create and strengthen a network of women's NGOs and support them with tools to work in their own families, communities, schools and social circles to promote mutual respect and understanding.
- Organize joint efforts of NGOs to increase the number of women who run for political office and civil society leadership and support them once they are elected.

- Lead by example and appoint women to high and leading positions in NGOs and encourage women to take on high-level positions in civil society, which can also have a significant impact on the culture of public debate and the discourse on human rights.
- Develop programs to empower migrant women
- Acknowledge the important role interfaith groups can play to promote equality
- We call upon NGOs and governments within the OSCE region and on the Mediterranean Partner States to work with existing networks of women's NGOs who promote the above mentioned activities and use their expertise and networking to expand these ideas.

### **Working group 2: The role of teachers and educators in promoting mutual respect and understanding and in countering intolerance and discrimination**

- States should institutionalize educational programs combating xenophobia, intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance.
- States should develop and implement national human rights education action plans and institutionalize human rights, tolerance, civic, coexistence, democracy and anti-discrimination education into the formal education system. One model that states have already agreed to is the UN World HRE program-Action Plan 2005-2008.
- Pre-service and in service teacher training should be mandatory to facilitate the delivery of curricula in the above mentioned areas.
- Promote mutual respect and understanding through teaching about the Holocaust, and other genocides its roots and universal lessons.
- States should integrate the historical narratives of minorities and neighbouring countries in the core curriculum.
- Fight racism in sports: football games are too often a scene of violence, discrimination and racism. However, football and sports as a whole, can be utilized as an example of non-violence and education for tolerance. We propose launching an all-European-Mediterranean campaign against hate violence through Champion League and through local football clubs in each country, recruit players who can serve as role-models for youth to promote tolerance through meeting with children and students and acting as spokespeople to the media on these issues.
- Gaps in educational opportunities between students of different ethnicities, cultures religion and economic means is not acceptable. States must integrate students from various sectors in order to expose them to each other and to enrich their education.
- Promote initiatives which encourage positive relationships and understanding among young people and students from different faiths, ethnic and cultural origins (as recommended by the Helsinki Final Act) through international exchanges, internships, meetings, and peer and mentoring programs.
- States should highlight and fund NGO programs and trainings on long-term HRE and other anti-discrimination, tolerance, and civic education programs.
- The Tolerance and non-Discrimination Information System website of the ODIHR should include programs, reports and best practices from the Mediterranean Partners region.

**Working group 3: The role of journalists and public personalities in promoting mutual respect and understanding and in countering misperceptions and prejudices**

We have strong concerns about the situation of freedom of expression in much of the Mediterranean region.

Therefore we urge the OSCE to organize further discussions on these issues, so as to insure broader regional representation at future meetings.

Some of us further recommend:

- promoting the positive portrayal of ethnic, religious and other minorities;
- promoting the participation of prominent editors and journalists in such seminars;
- encourage individual OSCE member states to promote the values of free media in their own bi-lateral relations with Mediterranean partner states;
- encouraging newsroom diversity by bringing journalists from different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds;