

STATEMENT
by H.E. Dr. Solomon Passy,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of
the Republic of Bulgaria,
at the OSCE Conference on
Anti-Semitism and on Other Forms of Intolerance,
Cordoba, 8-9 June 2005

Thank you very much Mr. Chairman, dear Dimitrij,
My friend Miguel Angel, distinguished colleagues,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a special honor and a privilege for me to address the Conference on anti-Semitism and on Other Forms of Intolerance here in Spain.

First of all, let me support what was said by our dear friend Jean Asselborn.

We may agree that any act of racial, social or religious intolerance and hostility undermines freedom and the peaceful future of our societies. The crucial importance of the issues was embedded among the **major priorities of our Chairmanship in 2004.**

I am privileged to speak on these issues with the legacy of widely recognized Bulgarian tolerance, solidarity and respect for ethnic and religious diversity. They marked the behavior of Bulgarians throughout history, including during WWII when we saved our Jews. The same values qualify Bulgaria as integral part of the European Project providing added value to the international agenda.

Our forum today has to reconfirm the support for tolerance, openness and dialogue. It has to reconfirm our adherence to common values.

Recent events in Europe associated with increased anti-European sentiments have to be in the focus of our attention as well. Popular votes against more united and institutionalized Europe are problems concerning all of us. Whether we like it or not, the agenda of the OSCE is linked to these challenges. The tendency of capsulation within Europe will be a major setback for the OSCE and a serious challenge on its basic principles – respect for common values and interests based on closer cooperation. The developments in the EU and the OSCE go hand in hand and reinforce each other. Therefore the major EU's concerns naturally become concerns of the OSCE and vice versa.

Last year I put forward the necessity the OSCE to devote closer attention and more resources to Central Asia. The events in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan proved we were right. This area is of particular importance. Combined with the alienation in Europe, the turbulences in Central Asia could lead to the reopening of the gap we all thought had been filled. And this gap provides the fertile ground for different manifestations of intolerance. To effectively fight xenophobia, anti-Semitism, discrimination of Muslims, ethnic and religious hatred and other forms of intolerance we need to go forward with the European project.

Mr. Chairman,

Since 2003 the OSCE has significantly intensified its activities to address the new challenges, to promote tolerance and combat discrimination in the OSCE region and beyond.

Now we should think on ways of adequate implementation avoiding routine repetition of high-level Conferences. Let's work on developing good practices.

Mr. Chairman,

My strong believe is that at the Cordoba Conference our **words of condemnation will be strengthened with action.**

I am confident that the decisions of the Conference will set the **benchmark** for attaining our common values against any manifestations of Intolerance.

And we should pay tribute to the Slovenian Chairmanship for its leadership in organizing this event and particularly to you Dimitrij.

Last but not least, let me extend my sincere appreciation to the Spanish government for hosting this Conference in this ancient city of Cordoba, the city of Three Cultures. Symbolic is our presence in Andalusia where the history is marked with cultural, ethnic and civilization interaction that was followed by new dialogue and development.

For me personally, it is emotional and symbolic that here in Cordoba today, after a break of five centuries we reunite with my cousin Minister ... who just spoke on behalf of Morocco.

Thank you dear Miguel Angel for the perfect organization and for the choice of the venue for our meeting – your constituency. And there is no better way for all of us to mark your birthday. You have obviously started the preparations for the Spanish chairmanship in 2007!

I wish you every success. On behalf of us: *Happy birthday!*