



**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Armenia
at the Session 4 *Promoting tolerance, respect for diversity and non-discrimination
through education and media, particularly among the younger generation*
of the OSCE Conference on Tolerance, and the Fight against Racism,
Xenophobia and Discrimination**

Brussels, September 14, 2004

Madam Chairperson,

The challenge for all of us today is to fight the specific ways in which intolerance manifests itself in practices, activities, and policies. Those activities encourage discrimination, leave unpunished xenophobic and racist violence, institutionalize marginalization.

The names and designations of the ‘aliens, marginals, inferiors’, are well known to all of us. And we are challenged to figure out what to do when people do not tolerate their neighbor, or when they don’t even want them as neighbors. In principle, inclusive education and equality before the law are good places to start. However, from principle to applied reality these require responsible legislation.

While symbols should not be mistaken for substance, they should not be dismissed as insubstantial, either. Many of the ills discussed would be well on their way to disappearing if inclusiveness and equality were accepted, respected and implemented.

The struggle to articulate, explain, promote, codify, legislate and enforce these principles has been both international and local. We wish to achieve universal access to and guarantee of human rights for all the world’s citizens.

Armenia’s minority populations, although small in number, continue to enjoy the government’s attention and equal protection under the law. It is an ample indication that we are fully engaged in one of society’s hardest tasks: to allocate equally and broadly the rights, privileges and benefits of human civilization.

The driving force is not just idealism but also pragmatism. Societies which *respect* – as prince Hassan of Jordan rightly emphasized that word – ‘others’ among themselves are more likely to respect the rights of their neighbors. Countries which acknowledge that national aspirations can be given their just dues without resorting to violence are the kinds of societies in which we ourselves wish to live, and which we all want at our borders.

But, Madam Chairperson, the world is not there yet. Under the guise of avoiding ‘politicizing’ a situation, those who chose to stay on the sideline, fail in the most basic of our norms and commitments: the explicit condemnation of acts and crimes driven by hatred. Anyone looking from outside, will marvel at the sanctimonious declarations about intent, values and principles of those who meanwhile choose to remain neutral and ambiguous in the presence of real hateful actions.

Even as the world champions human rights, we tolerate excessive human wrongs so long as they happen in distant lands. We tolerate historians who claim that there are circumstances in history that justify genocide. It is not for history’s sake alone that we must insist on acknowledging the wrongs of the past, but for the sake of the future. The political obstacles that exist today may be well left over from an unfinished and unreconciled past. And only those among us who can confront remembered wrongs without committing new ones will have earned the right to call ourselves modern, inclusive, tolerant, neighborly.

I must say frankly, Madam Chairperson, it was not surprising but very disappointing to hear Azerbaijani Delegate’s remarks stuffed with distortions and allegations. At least in this forum, he should have put a different light on the problem of Nagorno Karabakh.

Azerbaijan abrogated its responsibility to provide safety and security for the people of Nagorno Karabakh, when the latter legally, in accordance with the legislation, followed all necessary steps, to opt for self-determination. It is very telling that a sovereign government responded to the people’s democratic calls for self-determination with military means.

Despite recent memories of massacres and deportations, Armenians continue to express readiness to arrive at some compromise settlement. And this is not a diplomatic talk. At every step Armenia has stated and demonstrated its willingness to co-operate wherever possible, to create tolerance and implement confidence building measures, and continues to do so.

Let me conclude by saying that we continue to call on our neighbors to join us in searching for ways to go forward. In a complex, problematic neighborhood we know well that respect, equal and indiscriminate protection and inclusive education will mean the ability to secure the safety and dignity of entire populations, whole countries and regions. It truly does start with each country, one person at a time.

I thank you, Madam Chairperson.