



Ständige Vertretung
der Bundesrepublik Deutschland
bei der O S Z E
Permanent Mission
of the Federal Republic of Germany
to the OSCE

PC.DEL/983/03
4 September 2003

ENGLISH
Original:GERMAN

Vienna, 4 September 2003

Speech by Ms Kerstin Müller, Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office,
at the OSCE Conference Against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination
Vienna, 4 and 5 September 2003

Translation of advance text
Embargoed until delivery (4 September)

Mr Chairman,

The decision of the Netherlands OSCE Presidency to make racism, xenophobia and discrimination a new priority for the Organization is a very far-sighted one, given the increasing problems in this respect around the world. I welcome this step and congratulate the Presidency on this decision!

With this conference we are sending a strong message of our determination to combat racism and intolerance also in the world beyond our own borders. I am convinced that the OSCE in particular, the sole pan-European organization based on a comprehensive understanding of security, will be able to give important impetus to our efforts and evolve new strategies for addressing these issues.

For, as we are all well aware, racism, xenophobia and discrimination are a challenge that cannot be ignored by any democratic society founded on respect, tolerance and mutual understanding, irrespective of gender, origin, colour or religion. That goes not just for the OSCE area but for the whole world.

To take a stand against oppression, totalitarian ideologies and racism, to protect people from anti-democratic and extremist violence in any form - to oppose the enemies of freedom, in other words - is an ongoing task and one that requires the commitment of democratic forces all over the world.

The Federal Government firmly believes that efforts to combat racism, xenophobia and discrimination can only be successful and effective if government and civil society cooperate in pursuing a long-term, comprehensive and multidimensional strategy that also aims at international solutions.

To this end we have developed a "four-pillar concept".

Firstly: as part of our efforts to enhance respect for human rights on a sustainable basis, we have supported the establishment of an independent German Institute for Human Rights, which not only serves as an information and documentation centre but also actively advises policy-makers in this area. Since 1998 the German Bundestag has had its own Committee on Human Rights. With the appointment of a Federal Government Commissioner for Human Rights Policy and Humanitarian Aid, the Federal Government, too, has clearly demonstrated its commitment to the cause of human rights.

Secondly: it is a prerequisite of any open, democratic and multicultural society that its members live amicably together and treat one another with respect. That means there must be a

consensus on the norms and values on which such a society is built and a willingness to stand up for them. This requires a fundamental strengthening of civil society as well as efforts to foster civic courage. All sections of the population must be fully committed to and ready to actively defend human rights. No one must ignore, countenance or tolerate extremist attacks and abuse. It is in this spirit that the Federal Government is working closely with civil society bodies such as the Forum Against Racism, in which government officials and representatives of some 80 NGOs regularly discuss all matters relating to racism and xenophobia. I may add that human rights education - both inside and outside the classroom - is part of the core school curriculum in Germany.

Thirdly: the successful integration of migrants is a key factor in the battle against racism and discrimination. A modern immigration and integration policy is therefore one of our top priorities. Hence the Immigration Bill introduced by the Federal Government provides for state support for integration activities, creating for the first time a legal entitlement to assistance such as language and orientation courses. The best way to combat racism and xenophobia is not self-isolation and withdrawal but integration and equal rights for all. That is why we enacted a new Nationality Act, which through the introduction of *jus soli* enables the children of foreign nationals to become German citizens. During the current parliamentary term the Federal Government also plans to introduce an anti-discrimination bill that will enable members of minority communities to take legal action against discrimination.

Fourthly: the fourth pillar relates to action by the state to stop racist attacks by putting in place effective measures that target racist thugs and their supporters. To that end we have created a wide range of penal-law instruments. Alongside systematic action by the law enforcement authorities, we attach great importance to protecting and helping the victims of racist violence. Recognizing the need also for an active strategy of prevention, we have now launched a support scheme that seeks to help people wanting to quit the extremist scene (the so-called exit programme).

Mr Chairman,

Let me sum up: racism, xenophobia and discrimination constitute complex challenges that require action by the state as well as by civil society. I for my part am convinced that the only effective response is a determined, sustained and long-term strategy involving both government and civil-society actors which addresses the root causes of these problems. The success of such a strategy will crucially depend on whether the political community and society as a whole demonstrate real commitment to the principle of respect and acceptance of different cultures and ways of life as well as to equal rights for all. In this context the OSCE has a valuable contribution to make.

I hope that exploring our different experiences and strategies here together will enable us to make real progress in combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination. In this context we should reflect also on what instruments could be employed in the OSCE context to further this goal. Notably the proposal made by the EU member states for a follow-up monitoring of intolerance and racism is, I believe, an idea well worth pursuing. I hope and trust that this conference will be a milestone in the battle against racism, xenophobia and discrimination.