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Statement to the HDIM on Hate Crimes

I would like to recommend that we hold politicians to account for hateful and discriminatory language.

Politicians and prospective candidates must uphold human rights language in the words they use.

States should develop codes of conduct with effective mechanisms for ensuring this.

As committed to in the ministerial Council decision 13.06 in Brussels, states must also address hate speech in public discourse to promote mutual respect.

Yet, in August 2018 the now Prime Minister Boris Johnson of the UK made an extremely Islamophobic comment about Muslim women. According to Tell MAMA, the national charity which provides a reporting mechanism for victims of islamophobia, his comments resulted in a significant spike in anti-Muslim incidents.

Moreover, national and local politicians routinely demonise and criminalise Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities, which increases social exclusion and hate crimes. This was most evident in the racist murder of a boy called Jonny Delany, killed for being a Traveller in 2003.

Words matter. They legitimise hostility and reinforce prejudice, which leads to violence. We must cut it out.

Young people will not accept racist or prejudicial speech, nor will they vote for it.

I want to end with the words of Jo Cox, the British female politician killed by a neo-Nazi in 2016. "We have more in common than that which divides us". Politicians need to remember this.