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ASTANA DECLARATION
By the Chairperson-in-Office

Distinguished Delegates,

Let me sum up the proceedings of this High-Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, follow-up to the Bucharest High-Level Conference on Combating Discrimination and Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding, in what I would like to call

“Astana Declaration”.

Based on consultations, I understand that OSCE participating States,

Being inspired once more by the spirit of Astana, the Capital of multinational and multi-confessional Republic of Kazakhstan,

Noting that this conference is being held during the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, and being a testimony to the commitment of the international community to promote dialogue among civilizations and mutual understanding between peoples and religions,

Supporting various initiatives, including the initiative of President of Kazakhstan N.A.Nazarbayev on convening Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, in order to strengthen dialogue, mutual understanding and cooperation among religions, cultures and civilizations that are complementary and interrelated,

Reaffirming that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law is important in creating a context for intercultural, inter-religious and inter-ethnic understanding, and is at the core of the OSCE comprehensive concept of security, and that tolerance and non-discrimination are important elements in the promotion of human rights and democratic values,

Recalling the sixty-fifth anniversary of the end of World War II and determined to prevent the recurrence of such evil, are proud of the common achievements of the CSCE and the OSCE in striving towards global peace and security, reconciliation, co-operation and the promotion of democratic values, human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Having learnt from the past the dangers of intolerance, discrimination, extremism and hatred on ethnic, racial and religious grounds; reaffirming their determination to combat these threats and acknowledge that they may sow the seeds of conflict and violence on a wider scale,

Strongly condemning any denial of the Holocaust and all forms of ethnic cleansing; Confirming their adherence to the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide adopted on 9 December 1948 and calling to take every possible action to ensure that attempts to commit genocide are prevented today and in the future; taking measures to bring the perpetrators of such crimes to justice,

Concerned by the violent manifestations of intolerance throughout the OSCE region and acknowledging the urgent need for further co-operation among participating States and with civil society to combat these effectively,

Reaffirming the OSCE commitments on promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, and acknowledging that the primary responsibility for addressing acts of intolerance and discrimination rests with the participating States,

Taking note of the recommendations elaborated by the participants of the Civil Society Preparatory Meeting who acknowledged the value of inter-ethnic, inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue and stressed the paramount importance of respecting and promoting fundamental rights in the pursuit of tolerant and non-discriminatory societies, which respect the rights of all.

Recognizing the instrumental role that political representatives can play in taking the lead in combating intolerance and discrimination and promoting mutual respect and understanding,

1. Call for implementation of the OSCE commitments with a view to devising and implementing effective policy measures aimed at preventing and responding to manifestations of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, discrimination and intolerance, including against Christians, Muslims, members of other religions, Roma and Sinti, other ethnic and racial groups inter alia through legislation, law enforcement training, data collection and monitoring of hate crimes, education, media and constructive public discourse, the establishment of national institutions or specialized bodies, the development and implementation of national strategies and action plans in this field and the promotion of inter-ethnic and inter-cultural dialogue, including in its religious dimension;
2. Encourage to work with civil society in the prevention of hate crimes through, inter alia, community outreach, education, victim assistance and monitoring of hate groups;
3. Reiterate their concerns about the manifestations of intolerant and xenophobic political discourse, and call on political representatives, including parliamentarians, to continue to reject strongly and to condemn manifestations of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, discrimination and intolerance, including against Christians, Muslims, members of other religions, Roma and Sinti, other ethnic and racial groups and on the basis of gender, as well as violent manifestations of extremism associated with religious intolerance, aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism, while continuing to respect freedom of expression;
4. Recall the essential role that the free and independent media plays in democratic societies and the positive influence it can have in countering or exacerbating misperceptions and prejudices and in that sense continues to encourage the adoption of voluntary professional standards by journalists, media self-regulation and other appropriate mechanisms for ensuring increased professionalism, accuracy and adherence to ethical standards among journalists;
5. Call for a strengthened commitment to implement the 2003 Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area. Further call for stepping up efforts to implement the subsequent Ministerial Council Decisions, placing a particular emphasis on educational opportunities for Roma and Sinti and promoting tolerance and combating prejudices against Roma and Sinti in order to prevent their further

marginalization and exclusion, to address the rise of violent manifestations of intolerance against Roma and Sinti, and to take all necessary measures to ensure access to effective remedies;

6. Strongly condemn all manifestations of anti-Semitism. Recall the Berlin Declaration 2004 and declare unambiguously that international developments or political issues, including those in Israel or elsewhere in the Middle East, never justify anti-Semitism. Encourage to ensure a safe environment for Jewish communities across the OSCE region;
7. Commit to counter prejudice, discrimination, intolerance, and violence against Christians and members of other religions, including minority religions, which continue to be present in the OSCE region. Call to address the denial of rights, exclusion and marginalization of Christians and members of other religions in our societies;
8. Firmly reject the attempts to associate terrorism and extremism with Islam and Muslims and declare that international developments and political issues cannot justify any forms of intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in general. Call on full respect of international human rights standards, while fighting terrorism, and acknowledge that building trust, mutual understanding and respect among different communities and government authorities strengthens the efforts to counter extremism that may lead to violence. To this end, encourage to raise awareness of intolerance against Muslims and challenge anti-Muslim prejudice and stereotypes;
9. Acknowledge the relationship between intolerance and discrimination, including in its violent manifestations, and limitations of freedom of religion or belief and reaffirm their commitment to guarantee the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, including the right of the individual to profess and practice a religion or a belief alone or in community with others. Reaffirm the right of individuals to practice the religion of their choice;
10. Call to acknowledge the positive contribution of migrants to host societies and to speak out strongly against racist and xenophobic public discourse against migrants, refugees, non-citizens or asylum seekers, while continuing to respect freedom of expression;
11. Call to increase their efforts, in co-operation with civil society to counter the incitement to imminent violence and hate crimes, including through the Internet, within the framework of their national legislation, while respecting freedom of expression, as well as to use opportunities offered by the Internet for the promotion of democracy, human rights and tolerance education.
12. Encourage in cooperation with civil society and communities to engage in inter-cultural, inter-religious and inter-ethnic partnerships as a means to fight intolerance and to promote mutual respect and understanding. In this context, welcome the UN Alliance of Civilizations initiative, which aims at facilitating harmony and dialogue by underlining the common denominator of different cultures and religions.