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**STATEMENT BY
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THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE OSCE, AT THE OPENING
OF THE OSCE CONFERENCE ON ANTI-SEMITISM AND ON
OTHER FORMS OF INTOLERANCE**

Cordoba, 8 and 9 June 2005

Mr. President,
Distinguished Colleagues,

First of all, let me welcome you on behalf of the Russian delegation and also thank the Government of Spain which, as the initiator of this Conference, has organized it so outstandingly. It is also highly symbolic that our forum is taking place in Cordoba, “the city of three religions” and one in which ecumenical and inter-ethnic dialogue has been part of daily life for centuries.

In the year of the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, combating anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance is a matter of extreme topicality. Humanity recalls the terrible crimes of the Nazis with indignation and sorrow. Among the most bloody of these crimes was the Holocaust. Present and future generations must be aware of the causes of this horrifying crime and combat anti-Semitism, intolerance, extremism and xenophobia in all their manifestations. Attempts to make heroes out of those who participated in Nazi crimes, notably the SS as ideologists and perpetrators of the Holocaust, are inadmissible. We also have a duty to continue to pay respect to the memory of all the soldiers who died liberating Europe from Fascism and saving not only the Jewish but also many other peoples from total destruction.

World civilization today is coming up against a new and terrible threat, as the baton of the SS executioners has been picked up by international terrorists. The inhuman ideology of terrorism bears affinities to Nazism. And this evil of the twenty-first century can be combated effectively only through a concerted effort by the international community, as was shown by the member States of the Anti-Hitler coalition.

Xenophobia, nationalism and racial and religious intolerance also result in discrimination against national minorities and the inadmissible practice of the arbitrary removal of citizenship. Underestimation of this problem could have serious consequences for European security and give rise to conflicts. I should like to stress the importance for Russia of safeguarding the rights of Russian-speaking people, including Europeans, living outside

our country. I should also like to take this opportunity to call on the OSCE once again to step up its efforts in this important aspect of the fight against intolerance.

Russia was formed historically and exists today as a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional State. Inter-ethnic peace and accord are the prerequisites for stability in our country. For that reason, the fight against anti-Semitism and other manifestations of nationalism and chauvinism is one of the basic principles of the domestic policy of the Russian Federation. Russia is also willing to co-operate in a most extensive and productive manner in this area within the international arena, including the OSCE.

The fight against the various forms of intolerance has a long history. It will not be possible to solve this problem at one stroke. It will require painstaking and systematic work at the national and international levels to put a complete stop to any criminal manifestations of anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance and to develop dialogue, co-operation, education and media activity with a view to spreading the idea of tolerance. In view of its wide geographical scope and other comparative advantages, the OSCE is the most suitable forum for this task. If this endeavour is successful, it will make a real contribution to defining the Organization's current agenda and its place in the division of labour among international agencies operating in the Euro-Atlantic space.

Above all, however, the OSCE is the organization that should act as a model of widely understood tolerance. Unfortunately, this is not the case today. In our Organization it is not uncommon to encounter situations in which certain countries take a biased position, condemning other countries and showing intolerance in their criticism of partners. We believe that a single approach should predominate in the OSCE: the accent should be placed on the search for points of contact between the positions of participating States and the development of co-operation on the basis of equal rights. We hope that this topic will become one of the priorities in the reform of the OSCE.

In conclusion, I should like to mention that the Russian delegation is taking an extremely active part in the work of this Conference. We trust that it will culminate in a "Cordoba Declaration" containing useful conclusions and recommendations.

Thank you for your attention.