



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR TACAN İLDEM
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(Closing Plenary Session of the OSCE High-Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, Tirana, 21-22 May 2013)

Thank you Mr. Moderator.

I would like to join previous speakers in expressing our gratitude to the Ukrainian Chairmanship and to ODIHR for the excellent organization of the High-Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination. Our gratitude also goes to our Albanian hosts for the gracious hospitality provided to us in this beautiful city of Tirana. Finally we wish to thank all participants, particularly representatives of non-governmental organizations, for sharing their experiences and concerns and providing us many valuable recommendations. Thanks to their efforts, this important event will definitely contribute to the strengthening of our commitments in the area of tolerance and non-discrimination. We were pleased to participate in the Conference and share our viewpoints.

We believe that the various issues raised during the discussions of the past two days should serve as a wake-up call to participating States and OSCE institutions alike. The Conference has unfortunately once again underlined the fact that intolerance and discrimination are rampant in the OSCE area. If we are to take only one message when departing from this event, it is that all of us, the participating States, the OSCE with all of its institutions as well as civil society and even the various groups which are targeted and victimized, must do more. The unfavorable conditions brought about by the economic crisis and its contribution to rising levels of racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and other forms of intolerance make it even more necessary to step up our joint efforts and take urgent action. Our ultimate goal is and will remain an OSCE region stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok which is devoid of discrimination, prejudice, bigotry, hate and bias-motivated violence. Our Organization, with its multi-dimensional and comprehensive approach to security, with its vast experience accumulated over long decades, with its body of commitments to which we all subscribe, can provide us with the assistance we require along this path. All we need to do is to overcome our differences, indeed to promote a greater atmosphere of tolerance in the

OSCE itself, in order to be able to make use of the Organization more effectively, in the manner it was intended to be utilized.

Taking this opportunity, I would not fail to share one observation. Despite the fact that all the topics we have discussed here for the last two days have aspects which the institutions of the OSCE need to be cognizant of and get fully involved in, I find it puzzling that no institutions apart from ODIHR were present during the Conference. The next time such an event is held, all our institutions ought to be present. After all, it is one thing to study the recommendations made at a high-level conference, but quite another to actually attend it and 'feel the pulse'.

In closing, I would like to reiterate our hope and expectation that the valuable recommendations which have emerged from this Conference, that we all will study in detail, can help us follow up properly the results of the Conference and agree, in the coming period, on a decision in the area of tolerance and non-discrimination to be adopted at the upcoming Kyiv Ministerial Council for the full implementation of our commitments.

Thank you.