



Opening Remarks by Ambassador Janez Lenarčič
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and Human Rights

2009 Annual Police Experts Meeting on hate crimes and effective law
enforcement co-operation
Vienna, 29 – 30 October 2009

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by thanking the organizers for inviting me to address the opening of the Annual Police Experts Meeting on hate crimes and effective law enforcement cooperation.

The participating States of the OSCE have repeatedly reaffirmed their commitment to combat crimes motivated by racism, xenophobia, and other forms of intolerance – referred to as hate crimes. It is fair to say that the OSCE has in fact led the way by adopting international commitments in this field. These commitments reflect the knowledge that hate crimes, if not addressed properly, have the potential to escalate into wider scale violence, endangering social cohesion and affecting the security of individuals and communities.

But while this fact is recognized, the true test is whether recognition and commitments lead to positive developments and results on the ground.

2008 ODIHR Annual Report on Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region will be issued in a few weeks, on International Day of Tolerance on 16 November. From the data we gathered for this report from the participating States, field operations and NGOs,

one thing is clear: hate crimes happen all across the OSCE region. The victims may differ, the level of violence may vary, and the number of crimes may fluctuate, but this fact remains undisputed.

Those States that are able to accept that such crimes have occurred and to identify them as such are in the best position to successfully tackle the problem.

And this is where the law enforcement and police have a crucial role.

Police response to the hate-motivated incidents is the absolute first step in States' efforts to combat hate crimes.

ODIHR has recently launched a publication entitled *Hate Crime Laws: A Practical Guide*, which provides practical advice for lawmakers, campaigners and law enforcement personnel involved in developing or implementing hate crime legislation.

Additionally, I would like to direct your attention to the report from the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting (SHDM) "Hate Crimes – Effective Implementation", held earlier this year in Vienna, where the role of Police and law enforcement agencies was discussed. Recommendations contained in that report are

important instruments that can help guide future activities of Police and law enforcement agencies responses to hate crimes and hate incidents across the OSCE region.

Let me mention three of the main recommendations from this meeting:

- 1) OSCE participating States should provide training for law enforcement to combat racial prejudices amongst the police;
- 2) they should promote a multi-ethnic composition of the police, and
- 3) they should provide very precise instructions to the police on their responsibility to record and investigate hate crimes.

Finally, the ODIHR's *Law Enforcement Officer Programme on Combating Hate Crimes* focuses on the practical questions hate crime investigations present for law enforcement officers. And we have been delivering this programme for many years now, working intensively with national trainers to develop curricula for police academies on hate crimes. A similar training directed at prosecutors is currently being developed, and a training curriculum for civil society on hate crimes has already been compiled and implemented. These tools are part of ODIHR's efforts to support States to combat the scourge of hate crime and should be used as widely and as extensively as possible.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This meeting presents us with the opportunity to deepen our understanding, and improve our responses to the phenomenon of hate crimes. It is an opportunity to highlight and discuss common challenges, to ask ourselves how we can react more effectively, and to find ideas as to how to maximize our limited resources. We can learn about strategies and policies which have been tried, those which have worked and, just as importantly, those which have not.

I wish you a fruitful discussion.