

**DELEGATION OF TURKEY**

**4 September 2003**

**CONFERENCE ON RACISM, XENOPHOBIA AND DISCRIMINATION  
(Vienna, 4-5 September 2003)**

**Session 2: The role of Governments and civil society in promoting  
tolerance**

**Speaking Points**

Legislative measures aimed at deterring, preventing, punishing and eventually eradicating structural racism and discrimination are essential components of a comprehensive strategy. As the Rt. Honourable Bruce George, President of OSCE Parliamentary Assembly said today in his address during the luncheon, legislation compels change.

Nevertheless, such a strategy would not be complete without strong political resolve and consequent pro-active action. Excellent examples of such pro-active action have been shared with us by Frau Barbara John at the beginning of this session. We continue to be confident that such action will be maintained and further strengthened. This, we believe, is instrumental.

Countering prejudices, racist and discriminatory tendencies and intolerance can best be achieved through systematic promotion of tolerance, human values and respect for diversity. This requires constant and coordinated efforts by Governments and civil society at large. The first step should be overcoming existing prejudices in the society towards one another. Eventually, tolerance, acceptance, respect for the other and inclusiveness should become part of our daily life and political practice.

Government representatives, political leaders and other influential voices in the society, by condemning expressions and acts of racism, intolerance and hatred and by conveying messages of tolerance, mutual understanding and respect for one another, can play a positive role in that respect. However, most of the time they remain indifferent to and sometimes they themselves fuel such hatred. The use of racist and xenophobic arguments in political debate aggravates the climate of intolerance in some countries.

Civil society also can and should contribute to counter-racism efforts. Their potential can be instrumental particularly in raising awareness at the grassroots level and in providing assistance to victims. Dialogue and cooperation between Governments and civil society can provide better understanding and management of the difficulties encountered in the process. The representatives of civil society, therefore, should be involved in the assessment and decision-making processes.

Inter-religious and multicultural dialogue both at national and supra-national levels constitute an effective tool for communication and cooperation, with a view to increasing the knowledge of one another and promoting common universal values. I wish to recall that, the Joint Forum of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the European Union, held last year in February, in Istanbul, bringing together Foreign Ministers and high level representatives from member, observer and associated countries of both organizations to explore means for promoting tolerance sets an exemplary precedent to such initiatives.

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**Recommendations**

- Participating States should strive to eliminate all forms of institutionalized racism, as well as racist and discriminatory tendencies in the society, through effective action combining educational, criminal, economic and social measures.
- Participating States should strive to ensure that human rights and dignity of all individuals residing on their territory are respected and that they are protected from all forms of discrimination and racist violence.
- Governments should send strong and clear messages that racism will not be tolerated in whatever form it may be.
- Government representatives, political personalities and high level officials should publicly condemn racism, xenophobia and discrimination.
- Well known personalities, academicians, artists, representatives of profession groups, society organizations should be encouraged to initiate and/or join public campaigns to denounce racism, xenophobia and discrimination.
- Governments and civil society should take pro-active positive approach to fight against racist rhetoric, bias, prejudice, discrimination and to promote multiculturalism and humanitarian values in the society.
- Governments and civil society should collaborate in conducting counter-racism strategies and projects.
- Governments, IOs and civil society organizations should promote and help conduct inter-religious and multi-cultural dialogue as a means to promote tolerance, understanding and mutual respect.
- Efforts in the fight against racism, xenophobia and discrimination should be systematic.