

DELEGATION OF TURKEY

25 September 2007

**HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
(Warsaw, 24 September-5 October)**

Working Session 3: Combating intolerance and discrimination and promoting mutual respect and understanding – implementation of commitments (continued)

“PUBLIC DISCOURSE AND THE ROLE OF POLITICIANS”

Madame Moderator,

2006 ODIHR Hate Crimes report confirms the trend in which (biased and stereotyped) *“public discourse, manifesting itself in the media as well as on the Internet, tends to contribute to a climate of intolerance and to mounting tensions with respect to particular groups or people belonging to them.”* Mr. Doudou Diene, the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, in his last report to the UN, goes further in explaining the upsurge in incitement to racial and religious hatred by underlining the *“pervasiveness of racist and xenophobic platforms in the programmes of democratic parties and governmental alliances.”* As a consequence, he argues, *“an increasing number of traditionally democratic parties are now resorting to the language of fear and exclusion, scapegoating and targeting ethnic or religious minorities ...in order to maintain or acquire political power.”*

Indeed, a quick review of recent incidents related to the use of intolerant public discourse throughout the OSCE area, some of which have already been mentioned by Ms. De Zulueta, as well as by other speakers, would reveal that immigrants in general, Muslims in particular, constitute the main targets of such a political discourse. The advance of extreme right parties with open anti-Muslim platforms seems to be unstoppable in several European countries. We join the United States in their dismay about the creation of the *“Identity, Tradition and Sovereignty Group”*, which gathers representatives from far-right parties of seven EU member States in the European Parliament, a vital institution which lies at the heart of contemporary democratic values and principles. We also note with regret the statements of wariness not only by politicians but also those expressed by religious leaders for the places of worship of another major religion.

Madame Moderator,

It was against this background that the OSCE Ministerial Council in Brussels last year expressed deep concern regarding racist, xenophobic and discriminatory public discourse and deplored it. The Ministerial Council also stressed the *“positive role that can be played by the political representatives by speaking out against hate-motivated acts and incidents and by recognizing the contributions that all individuals can make to a harmonious pluralistic society.”* Since then, we observe with satisfaction that political leaders have started, albeit timidly, to grasp the significance of distancing themselves from intolerant political discourse.

Others took more ambitious initiatives to counter racist discourse by forging an alliance among ethnic and religious communities. Three recommendations for this year:

- The OSCE should call for a strengthened commitment by political leaders, parliamentarians and those who shape public opinion to strongly reject and condemn manifestations of hate and xenophobia, particularly those of racist, xenophobic, anti-Semitic and discriminatory political platforms. The OSCE should also call for a more proactive role by the politicians and parliamentarians to raise awareness about the value of diversity as a source of mutual enrichment of societies.
- The OSCE should encourage the political parties in the OSCE area to adopt codes of ethical conduct or adhere to the existing ones such as the Charter of European Parties for a Non-Racist Society in order to commit their members to refrain from racist, xenophobic and discriminatory discourse, also during election campaigns when their statements are cast in higher relief.
- The ODIHR election observation missions should monitor the public discourse during election campaigns and report on cases of racist, xenophobic and discriminatory discourse.

In concluding, Madame Moderator, it would be remiss if we did not underline the positive role the media can play in addressing hate speech and racist discourse through self-regulation. We look forward to the side event jointly organized by the Representative on the Freedom of the Media and the ODIHR on “Freedom of Expression and Hate Speech: Combating Intolerant Discourse within a Human Rights Framework.”

Thank you.