



**OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
(Warsaw, 29 September-10 October 2008)**

Working Session 10: Tolerance and Non-Discrimination II

**Statement by Ambassador Yusuf BULUÇ
Permanent Representative of Turkey to the OSCE**

Thank you Mr. Moderator,

The idea of human rights is based on the respect for inherent human dignity. Non-discrimination provides the essential foundation for the enjoyment of human rights by everyone and for equality in their exercise.

While some might find it tiresome, sharpening trend towards perceiving and portraying the tolerance and non-discrimination issues as separate from or even secondary to the core human rights issues urge us to constantly remind ourselves of this fundamental principle. This perception should be countered by reaffirming that respect for human dignity and non-discrimination are central to the human rights movement. The priority assigned to the fight against intolerance and discrimination is of the same order of that attached to the protection of human rights. The facts on the ground also confirm this view, sadly through events which reveal the human and humanitarian cost of breaking this link.

The racist and xenophobic violence, mostly committed by neo-Nazi, ultra nationalist and extreme right-wing groups, is growing in parallel with a worrying trend which constitutes the most serious threat to democracy and human rights: the political trivialization and democratic legitimization of racism and xenophobia. Racist and xenophobic discourses increasingly define platforms to exert growing influence in shaping programmes of political parties, including through their direct or indirect alliances in the formation of governments.

It is worth repeating that the growth of incitement to racial and religious hatred and resurgence of all manifestations of intolerance create an environment in which vulnerable groups face growing challenges to enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Responding to these challenges is primarily a political responsibility. Governments, parliamentarians and municipal authorities have their important roles to play. Civil society and the NGOs should also be engaged and indeed be called to task.

In this regard, the events in Cologne on the 4th of September this year marked an important milestone. While measures have been taken by the authorities, the real players were the NGOs. One group of NGOs decided to pool their intolerant and xenophobic energies and focus them on the ill-conceived cause of preventing the construction of a mosque. Another group of NGOs launched a countervailing demonstration displaying their tolerant and

integrationist credentials. This, in addition to being a test to the level of maturity of democracy, it went on to show the strength of the mainstream opinion that attempts to isolate only leads to greater confrontation and radicalization. Forces of moderation prevailed and forces of discrimination and hate were rejected. I wanted to put this on record as a sign of our welcome. We need coalitions of solidarity such as this one across the various groups in society to counter racist and xenophobic platforms.

This is also true for international actors. Recognizing the need for a global coalition to address extremism based on intolerance and misperceptions, Turkey and Spain have launched the Alliance of Civilizations initiative under the UN auspices. The Alliance by now has received the support of 78 States and 13 international organizations coupled with its endorsement by the UN Secretary General. Council of Europe recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Alliance to give an institutional character to its association with the initiative. Based on partnerships between States, civil society and private sector to implement concrete projects in the fields of media, education, youth and migration, the Alliance is also seeking the continued contribution of the OSCE. At the Ministerial Council in Helsinki this year, to crown the able Chairmanship of Finland, the OSCE participating States should aim to establish the framework for an institutional cooperation with this global initiative.

Mr. Moderator,

Recent surveys confirm the fact that the increase in intolerance and hate crimes is felt across the OSCE area. Furthermore, education is identified as the most effective way to change this worrisome trend. We recommend the ODIHR to continue to work with civil society and other international initiatives, including the Alliance of Civilizations, for further developing its tools in education to address different forms of intolerance.

In a globalized world, we also need to invest more in the prevention and early warning of potential intercultural conflicts based on misperceptions and prejudices, instantly disseminated through the media and the internet. States and civil society should cooperate to monitor and analyze patterns of hate motivated crimes and incidents. The ODIHR's Hate Crime Report provides a valuable tool and insights in this regard.

Faced with unprecedented economic uncertainty and identity crisis, especially the youth is becoming more prone to right wing or religious extremism today than ever before. The recent election results with huge gains for the political parties which spearhead the policies for discrimination in Austria should be a wake-up call for all of us to focus our attention on engaging with all segments of the electorate and particularly with the youth more intensely. There is more to be done by the ODIHR and the contribution by three Personal Representatives in this area is unique and indispensable.

Participating States should keep the political momentum of their fight against intolerance and provide the necessary resources to tackle the challenges. We hope that a possible OSCE conference in 2009, with an appropriate agenda covering different forms of intolerance in a balanced manner, will be one of our actions to serve this end.

Thank you.