

Translation

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Statement by Minister of State Müller
for the OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism and Other Forms of Intolerance
in Cordoba on 8 and 9 June 2005

Opening Session: "Fighting anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination, and promoting tolerance: from recommendations to implementation"

Foreign Minister,
Mr Chairman,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to be able to represent the German Government at this important conference on anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination in Cordoba. Allow me to express to our hosts, Foreign Minister Moratinos and his team, my appreciation for the excellent planning and organization of this major conference and for their generous hospitality. And thank you, Mr Chairman, Minister Rupel, for your commitment to continuing the series of OSCE Conferences on Anti-Semitism and Other Forms of Intolerance.

The city of Cordoba, with its extraordinary history, is a suitable location for our conference and provides a fitting background. It was here that Europe's common Judeo-Christian-Islamic heritage bore rich fruit.

Today we, representing 55 countries of Europe, Asia and North America, have come to Cordoba to discuss the joint and individual efforts we have made to implement the declarations from last year's tolerance conferences in Berlin, Brussels and Paris. The contents of these conferences on anti-Semitism, racism and hate-motivated crimes on the Internet are closely related. For the methods and measures to combat the different crimes of intolerance are basically the same. However, we must never lose sight of the fact that we cannot simply lump all the forms of intolerance together. If we treat the manifestations of intolerance only as a single entity, we risk blurring boundaries, ignoring differences and overlooking specifics. Unfortunately, anti-Semitism has such a long and terrible history in Europe, but not only there, that this kind of generalization would not do it justice. We owe it to ourselves above all in view of the Holocaust and our history to retain a clear view of its characteristics, roots and consequences.

What steps did we take in Germany last year to implement the Berlin Declaration on combating anti-Semitism? The Federal Government initially concentrated on establishing structures to facilitate the compilation of statistics on anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination throughout the entire OSCE area and the introduction of joint measures to overcome these problems. We are also providing extensive support to the ODIHR both by seconding anti-Semitism and racism experts and assisting with project implementation. In my view the new structures in the ODIHR are extremely useful, as they form a basis for the work of the Personal Representative on Combating anti-Semitism, which I consider to be crucially important. Similarly, they also provide the necessary support for the two other Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office: the Personal Representative on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination and the Personal Representative on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The rise in anti-Semitic attitudes, which according to recent surveys is not limited to Germany, ought to fill us with great concern and challenge us to take practical and radical action.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The implementation of the Berlin Declaration must not, however, be restricted to our joint OSCE activities. The OSCE participating states must also be ready to account for what they are undertaking to fulfil their responsibility at the national level. This is one aspect of the commitments the OSCE participating states have made.

We, the Federal Government, have therefore made education on anti-Semitism and the Holocaust a national priority. I would like to take this opportunity to mention the pilot programme we have launched – Youth for Tolerance and Democracy – against Right-Wing Extremism, Xenophobia and anti-Semitism, as one example of a preventive-educational approach in the area of youth work. Since the action programme commenced in 2001 we have promoted more than 4,000 projects, initiatives and measures.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Just a few words on where we must go from here. In general, keeping the memory of the terrible crimes of the Holocaust alive, particularly for future generations, remains a crucial factor in attacking the roots of anti-Semitism. On 10 May the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe was finally unveiled in Berlin. Remembrance and awareness-raising can take many

forms. However, a memorial of this kind in the heart of the capital may well be the first important step in prompting young people especially to study the past. If we achieve this, the Memorial will already have fulfilled its purpose.

First, it is important that we all, in our dual roles as OSCE participants and individual states, put the Berlin Declaration into practice as soon as possible. At the Berlin Conference on anti-Semitism we laid a firm foundation for the OSCE on which we can build. Now we are called upon to act – merely paying lip service will achieve nothing.

In my view we are still far from reaching the end of the path we marked out in Berlin, but Cordoba will bring us an important step further forward. We still face considerable challenges, and I am convinced we can only overcome them together.

Thank you very much.