



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
High Commissioner on National Minorities**

Address by
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to the

**Second Moscow International Conference on Combating Antisemitism,
Xenophobia, and Racism
“Protecting the Future”**

[Check against delivery]

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Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome the opportunity to address this gathering on a topic that unfortunately, despite the lessons of history, has not lost any of its relevance in today's world.

The issues that we are discussing today are very close to my heart. The function of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities was established back in 1992, to address ethnic tensions and to prevent inter-State crises or conflicts over national minority issues. While the term "national minority" and who falls under that is a debated question- one that I do not intend to elaborate on in this short address- protecting and promoting diversity is an inherent part of my mandate. Racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and similar forms of discrimination are clear warning signs of a poor management of diversity and a failure of integration processes in multi-ethnic societies. Because of their potential to trigger crises or ignite conflicts, they are very much on my radar.

The significance of today's topic to my work goes back to the very origins of the Institution. As far back as 1993, just one year after the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities was formally created, in a Ministerial Council held in Rome participating States invited "the High Commissioner on National Minorities, in light of his mandate, to pay particular attention to all aspects of aggressive nationalism, racism, chauvinism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism". Since then, the commitment to focus on this threat has been echoed by the OSCE family on a number of occasions. Recalling the OSCE conference on anti-Semitism in Berlin a decade earlier, in 2014 in Basel participating States rejected and condemned all manifestations of anti-Semitism which "remain a challenge to stability and security" and called on "political, religious and civil society leaders to engage in open discussions with a view to combating and preventing anti-Semitism while fully respecting fundamental freedoms and human rights." I very much see this conference, as well as other such events- such as the one that the Italian Chairmanship of the OSCE organized in Rome earlier this year and

which I attended- a concrete response to this call. Talking about the issue is a crucial step to counter it.

Such events, and the declarations that they generated, are also important in that they ensured a specific approach to counter anti-Semitism be put at the top of the OSCE agenda. This process has been strengthened by the appointment of an OSCE Personal Representative on Combating Anti-Semitism, a post instituted in 2005. In recent years we are proud that a database to track and document hate crime, including against Jews, has been developed; that specific educational materials to counter anti-Semitism have been issued and their use promoted; that law enforcement personnel and prosecutors have been trained on hate crime- just to mention some of the projects implemented by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), our sister institution under the OSCE umbrella.

Yet again, despite these efforts and the efforts of a number of organizations active in the field, discrimination based on religion and ethnicity is on the rise. Incidents of anti-Semitism are a regular occurrence. Muslims and Christians are also a target. The most recent immigration waves and the challenge of integrating these communities into the broader social fabric of the receiving society have often stoked racist and xenophobic reactions. The media, including the new communications platforms such as social media, have unfortunately contributed to divulging hate speech and negative stereotypes.

Going back to the main question of this conference, how do we *protect the future* from racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism? I do not have the perfect recipe, but some ideas and tools that I would like to put forth for your consideration.

First, we should continue to work for the integration of our diverse societies, by for example guaranteeing access to education and justice to all, by promoting a balanced use of language, by enhancing participation in public life. My Institution has published a number of valuable documents in this regards – the so-called

“Recommendations” or “Guidelines”- which help countries develop policies that allow them to strike a balance between integration of society and protection and promotion of minority identities.

A second factor is social cohesion, which can only be achieved if we break isolationism. Living side by side but living entirely separate lives is not good enough: there must be genuine interaction and mutual benefits.

Another element is education. Racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism often stem from ignorance. When people are unfamiliar with other cultures, they often perceive them as threatening. Education plays an essential role in breaking down stereotypes, explaining the richness of diversity, and broadening understanding of universal human rights.

Finally –and the history of the Jews is very telling in this context- acknowledgment, awareness, and remembrance. We cannot change the atrocities that happened in the past. But remembering them, talking about them and learning from them is in everyone’s interest, and a responsibility that no one can shun. Thank you for providing a forum for such discussions.