

Seminar
**"Hate Speech from Street to Cyber –Space:
Cases and Policies in Specific Contexts"**

*31 March – 1 April 2006
Central European University, Budapest, Hungary*

Key notes for Presentation at the Panel of Diplomats

1. Introduction

- My presentation is not going to be comprehensive or academic and will rather focus on some recent international developments closely related to the phenomena of hate speech, intolerance, extremism and terrorism.

- Unfortunately these evils are widely spread in the world and particularly in the OSCE region. This is generally recognized by the international community and measures are taken to overcome, counter-act or fight hate speech, intolerance, extremism and terrorism. These measures on national and international levels provide for both criminal punishment for committed crimes as well as promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination especially in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies. But more coordinated and coherent actions with participation of governments, international organizations, civil society, including Media, and business are needed.

II. Hate speech Classification

- I think that we have to distinguish different cases of hate speech. Some of them could be subject to legal evaluation, some should be deplored morally.

- To my knowledge the Russian legislation provides for criminal prosecution of propaganda and incitement to war, terrorism, violence, hatred, extremism, different forms of discrimination – according to race, religion, social status, nationality or language.

- A very significant role in curbing the use of hate speech is played by voluntary self-restraining instruments of the civil society. For example, in Russia the "Code of journalist's professional ethics" recommends that a journalist should completely comprehend the threat of violence, which could be provoked by his or her publications or reports. This document also stipulates that journalists should counteract extremism, and respect dignity of a person who gets into focus of Media attention.

- There is certainly a "grey zone" where we can attribute cases of hate speech which raise questions whether they are criminal or not. On the national level these cases are considered in courts. Often it is difficult for a judge to pronounce a verdict since two fundamental democratic principles can collide here – freedom of expression and protection of individual rights.

- In international relations it is even more difficult to establish priorities between these principles due to fundamental differences in human values, perceptions, mentality and patterns of behavior in different societies. I will probably say a few words about this later in relation to so called "cartoon crisis". But first some reflections on hate speech and terrorism.

III. Hate Speech and Terrorism

- As I already mentioned, propaganda and incitement to terrorism should be criminally punished. The gist of the UN Security Council Resolution 1624 exactly calls for this.

- But there are cases when Media indirectly intentionally or unintentionally provide terrorists with a worldwide information network, thus in fact assisting terrorists to fulfill their main objectives – terrorize people, spread fear and breed hatred. One of the most striking examples of such irresponsible behavior was broadcasting of an interview with the international terrorist Shamil Basayev by the American TV company ABC.

- This example illustrates that journalists should not be beyond morality and sense of responsibility, even when such cases are not regulated by law.

- It is not justified to focus only on those things that journalists are not supposed to do. Journalists can play a more pro-active role in promotion in societies the awareness that terrorism could not serve as an instrument to attain political goals, that terrorist activities should be unconditionally condemned. Closer co-operation between Media and state in this area is welcomed.

- The OSCE is not enough effective in this particular area of its responsibility and I call this Organization to pay more attention to this important aspect of its mandate.

IV. "Cartoon Crisis"

- Problem of hate speech and "cartoon crisis" are closely related. This crisis explicitly illustrated differences in mentalities and perceptions in different societies as well as collision of principle of freedom of expression and religious values.

- Unfortunately the incident with publishing of a cartoon depicting Prophet Mohammad in the Danish newspaper was used by extremists who tried to inflame ethnic and religious conflicts. Violent acts, which were witnessed recently in some countries, could not be justified by any offence of religious feelings.

- But it should be admitted that extremists used their chance to trigger violence because necessary conciliatory measures were not timely taken. Without any detriment to the freedom of expression political leaders should call for responsibility and respect to other cultures and religions. If necessary, they should distance themselves from manifestation of intolerance and disrespect to religious values of other people.

- "Cartoon crisis" exposed differences in the world, which at the same time is becoming more integrated. It is utmost important to find ways to overcome these differences, to find ways and means for civilizations to co-exist. Russia supports and tries to make positive input into implementation of the Alliance of Civilizations initiative.

- We seek to intensify the work of the OSCE in promoting tolerance and non-discrimination. We are convinced that the OSCE can play in this area an "umbrella role" for other international organizations on Euro-Atlantic space both East and West from Vienna.

- But for the time being the OSCE, unfortunately, failed. In fact there was no proper reaction to "cartoon crisis". The OSCE structures and institutions proved to be unable to coordinate their attitude towards this serious issue. No agreement was among participating States. The OSCE missed the chance to use its comprehensive advantages – early warning and conflict prevention as well as rapid reaction potentials – we are so proud of.

V. Conclusion

- In my presentation I often used the word "*different*": different values, mentalities, perceptions and patterns of behavior. But "*different*" doesn't mean hostile. Differences should not be left unattended and transform into conflicts. We do not believe in "clash of civilizations", we rather can talk about "crisis of dialog"

between civilizations. Governments, civil societies, media, international organizations, including the OSCE, are expected to be actively engaged in finding ways and means for peaceful co-existence of religions, nations, cultures and ethnic groups. A new arsenal of preventive measures, as well as instruments for conflict management and peaceful settlement of disputes need to be elaborated. If we achieve success in these efforts, differences can become a source of progress, rather than confrontation.