

Second day of the Fourteenth Meeting
MC(14) Journal No. 2, Agenda item 8

DECISION No. 13/06
COMBATING INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION
AND PROMOTING MUTUAL RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING

The Ministerial Council,

Recalling that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law is at the core of the OSCE comprehensive concept of security,

Recognizing that manifestations of discrimination and intolerance threaten the security of individuals and societal cohesion, and may give rise to wider-scale conflict and violence,

Acknowledging that the promotion of a culture of mutual respect, understanding and equality and the pursuit of equal opportunities for effective participation in democratic societies requires a systematic, comprehensive and long-term approach,

Deeply concerned by racist, xenophobic and discriminatory public discourse,

Reaffirming the need for determination by the participating States in combating all acts and manifestations of hate, including hate crimes, recognizing that the efforts required to address them often involve a common approach, while at the same time recognizing the uniqueness of the manifestations and historical background of each form,

Recalling its commitments in the field of tolerance and non-discrimination enshrined in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe, the 1991 Document of the Cracow Symposium on the Cultural Heritage of the CSCE Participating States, the 1999 Charter for European Security, as well as in the decisions of the OSCE Ministerial Council adopted at Porto (MC(10).DEC/6), Maastricht (MC.DEC/4/03), Sofia (MC.DEC/12/04) and Ljubljana (MC.DEC/10/05),

Recalling the OSCE's increased focus on combating intolerance and discrimination and promoting mutual respect and understanding, embodied in the 2003 Vienna Conferences on Anti-Semitism and on Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, the April 2004 Berlin Conference on Anti-Semitism, the June 2004 Paris Meeting on the Relationship between Racist, Xenophobic and Anti-Semitic Propaganda on the Internet and Hate Crimes, the September 2004 Brussels Conference on Tolerance and the Fight against Racism,

Xenophobia and Discrimination, and the June 2005 Cordoba Conference on Anti-Semitism and on Other Forms of Intolerance and recalling the outcomes of those conferences,

Reaffirming its determination to implement the existing OSCE commitments in the fields of tolerance and non-discrimination and noting the contribution of the 2006 tolerance-related implementation focused thematic meetings on Inter-Cultural, Inter-Religious and Inter-Ethnic Understanding (Almaty), on Education to Promote Mutual Respect and Understanding and to Teach about the Holocaust (Dubrovnik) and on Hate Crimes Data Collection (Vienna),

Recognizing the work of the three Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office in support of the overall effort of the OSCE to combat intolerance and discrimination and wishing a review of their contribution to this overall effort by the Chairman-in-Office, in consultation with the participating States, during the course of 2007,

Acknowledging the essential role civil society can play in combating intolerance and discrimination and promoting mutual respect and understanding,

Being alarmed at any rise of political parties, movements and groups advocating violence,

Also being concerned, in this context, at violent manifestations of extremism associated with racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism,

Recalling the contribution of the OSCE to the UN Alliance of Civilizations Initiative with the goal of forging collective political will and mobilizing concerted action at the institutional and civil society levels to promote mutual respect and understanding, and noting the High-Level Group's report, presented to the UN Secretary-General on 13 November 2006 in Istanbul, which aims at establishing, under the auspices of the UN, partnerships between international organizations that share the goals of the Alliance of Civilizations,

1. Decides to convene, during the first half of 2007, a High-Level Conference on Combating Discrimination and Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding, following up on the 2005 Cordoba Conference on Anti-Semitism and Other Forms of Intolerance and welcomes the offer by Romania to host that Conference;
2. Tasks the Permanent Council to consider ways to further strengthen the effectiveness, coherence and consistency of the work of the OSCE in combating intolerance and discrimination and promoting mutual respect and understanding, from 2007 onwards, with a view towards more effective implementation of commitments;
3. Encourages the participating States to recognize the positive contribution that all individuals can make to the harmonious pluralistic character of our societies by promoting policies focusing on equality of opportunity, rights, access to justice and public services, and on fostering dialogue and effective participation;
4. Commits to raise awareness of the value of cultural and religious diversity as a source of mutual enrichment of societies and to recognize the importance of integration with respect for cultural and religious diversity as a key element to promote mutual respect and understanding;

5. Calls upon the participating States to address the root causes of intolerance and discrimination by encouraging the development of comprehensive domestic education policies and strategies as well as through increased awareness-raising measures that:

- Promote a greater understanding of and respect for different cultures, ethnicities, religions or beliefs;
- Aim to prevent intolerance and discrimination, including against Christians, Jews, Muslims and members of other religions;
- Promote remembrance and education about the tragedy of the Holocaust, as well as other genocides, recognized as such in accordance with the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and crimes against humanity;

6. Acknowledges the important contribution youth can make to the fight against intolerance and discrimination and encourages the continuation and further development of good practice activities such as human rights education at an early age throughout the OSCE region and to organize an OSCE youth event in 2007 taking into account the experience and expertise of other relevant international and regional organizations in this field in order to avoid duplication;

7. Decides to promote capacity-building of law enforcement authorities through training and the development of guidelines on the most effective and appropriate way to respond to bias-motivated crime, to increase a positive interaction between police and victims and to encourage reporting by victims of hate crime, i.e., training for front-line officers, implementation of outreach programmes to improve relations between police and the public and training in providing referrals for victim assistance and protection;

8. Deplores racist, xenophobic and discriminatory public discourse, and stresses that political representatives can play a positive role in the overall promotion of mutual respect and understanding and have a significant impact in defusing tensions within societies, by speaking out against hate-motivated acts and incidents and by recognizing the positive contributions that all individuals can make to a harmonious pluralistic society;

9. Recognizes the essential role that the free and independent media can play in democratic societies and the strong influence it can have in countering or exacerbating misperceptions, prejudices and in that sense encourages the adoption of voluntary professional standards by journalists, media self-regulation and other appropriate mechanisms for ensuring increased professionalism, accuracy and adherence to ethical standards among journalists;

10. Underlines the crucial importance of States enacting a sound legal framework ensuring equality before the law and adequate judicial protection and pursuing strategic policies and plans that facilitate non-discrimination and equal opportunities;

11. Encourages the participating States to step up their efforts in implementing their commitments to collect and maintain reliable data and statistics on hate crimes which are essential for effective policy formulation and appropriate resource allocation in countering hate-motivated incidents and, in this context, also invites the participating States to facilitate

the capacity development of civil society to contribute in monitoring and reporting hate-motivated incidents and to assist victims of hate crimes;

12. Decides that the participating States should engage more actively in encouraging civil society's activities through effective partnerships and strengthened dialogue and co-operation between civil society and State authorities in the sphere of promoting mutual respect and understanding, equal opportunities and inclusion of all within society and combating intolerance, including by establishing local, regional or national consultation mechanisms where appropriate;

13. Encourages the OSCE executive structures, within their existing mandates, to incorporate elements combating intolerance and discrimination and the promotion of mutual respect and understanding into their current and future activities throughout the OSCE region;

14. Encourages the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), based on existing commitments, including through co-operation with relevant OSCE executive structures:

- (a) To further strengthen the work of its Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Programme, in particular its assistance programmes, in order to assist participating States upon their request in implementing their commitments;
- (b) To further strengthen the work of the ODIHR's Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief in providing support and expert assistance to participating States;
- (c) To continue its close co-operation with other relevant inter-governmental agencies and civil society working in the field of promoting mutual respect and understanding and combating intolerance and discrimination, including through hate crime data collection;
- (d) To continue to serve as a collection point for information and statistics on hate crimes and relevant legislation provided by participating States and to make this information publicly available through its Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Information System and its report on Challenges and Responses to Hate-Motivated Incidents in the OSCE Region;
- (e) To strengthen, within existing resources, its early warning function to identify, report and raise awareness on hate-motivated incidents and trends and to provide recommendations and assistance to participating States, upon their request, in areas where more adequate responses are needed;

15. Encourages the Representative on Freedom of the Media, within available resources, to consider reviewing best practices in matters of his/her competency relating to combating intolerance;

16. Looks forward to UN action on the report of the High Level Group of the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative with a view to considering an appropriate OSCE contribution towards its implementation.