

2008 OSCE MEDITERRANEAN CONFERENCE

REPORT OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY SIDE EVENT “Co-operation with the Mediterranean civil society and NGOs in promoting tolerance and non-discrimination”

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Civil society representatives from the OSCE participating States and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation welcomed the opportunity to discuss issues pertaining to the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination and formulate recommendations to the respective governments, OSCE, its Missions and Institutions, as well as civil society organizations in the OSCE region and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.

The participants emphasized that the right to live in peace is a fundamental right of the whole of mankind, and OSCE participating States have stressed that issues relating to human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law are of international concern, as respect for these rights and freedoms constitutes one of the foundations of the international order,

Stressing that security in the OSCE region is inseparable from that of the Mediterranean,

Acknowledging that the resolution of regional conflicts will foster mutual respect and understanding,

They recommend to the OSCE participating States and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation to:

- Respect OSCE commitments and other applicable international law provisions promoting equality, tolerance and human rights
- Abide by international legal instruments that govern peaceful coexistence as well as by all other international law standards conducive to reducing violence, inequality and discrimination in the region;
- Implement humanitarian law so as to diminish the hardships encountered by civil population living under occupation;
- Respect the linguistic rights of national minorities, in particular:
 - o the right to obtain education in their own language;
 - o the right to establish and maintain their own minority language media and have access to broadcast time in their own language on publicly funded media;
 - o the right to use the personal names in their own language, according to their own traditions and linguistic systems.
- Uphold provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and protect human rights activists from persecution;
- Create favourable conditions for functioning of civil society organizations working on tolerance and non-discrimination issues and raise public awareness of the importance of tolerance and an inclusive society;
- Support the creation of the civil society networks throughout the OSCE region and foster closer links between these networks with NGOs based in the Mediterranean region.

Working group 1: Empowerment of women as actors in preventing of conflict, peace-building and enhancing democratization

- Ensure the prevalence of women's rights over existing religious and traditional practices;
- Eliminate traditional practices that violate physical integrity of women, combat the practice of honour crimes and enforce criminal laws against the perpetrators of such crimes;
- Adopt legislative and practical measures that facilitate equal access of women to the labour markets in order to achieve economic independence;
- Review education material to reflect that women are equal participants of society ;
- Encourage media to counter stereotypes on women that may hinder effective gender equality.

Working group 2: Migration as a challenge and as an opportunity to improve tolerance and understanding

- Strive to legalize the status of as many migrants as possible, in order to decrease their vulnerability to exploitation, abuse and facilitate their social inclusion;
- Recognise that equal rights and social integration of migrants benefit both the migrants, the countries of origin and also the host societies, while their exclusion fosters exploitation, social exclusion and has negative effects on the migrants and host societies;
- Give official and public recognition to the contribution of migrants to the economic, cultural, social and demographical spheres in the host societies;
- When enforcing migration policies, ensure respect of human rights, in particular the due process guarantees, privacy rules, children's rights and prohibition of racial profiling. Violation of these rights does not prevent irregular migration, but only fosters xenophobia and racism against all migrants and citizens of different ethnic origin;
- Include human rights, tolerance and respect in school curricular and civic education classes, including modules on other than dominant cultures, emphasizing the enriching contributions of immigrants to the local society in the past and in the present.

Working group 3: Intercultural dialogue as a conflict prevention tool

- Promote teaching about religions, beliefs and cultures in formal education;
- Recognize that political representatives have moral imperative and social responsibility to speak out against hate-motivated acts and incidents, and to avoid the use of intolerant and inflammatory statements which may incite prejudice, hatred or hostility against individuals or groups on the basis of race, ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation or disability;
- Safeguard freedom of expression and media, including the internet, but at the same time monitor, investigate and prosecute, when necessary, hate speech and incitement to violence in media, including the internet.