



**2008 OSCE  
MEDITERRANEAN CONFERENCE  
ON THE OSCE APPROACH TO REGIONAL SECURITY – A MODEL FOR  
THE MEDITERRANEAN  
27 and 28 OCTOBER 2008**

**CIVIL SOCIETY SIDE EVENT  
“CO-OPERATION WITH THE MEDITERRANEAN CIVIL SOCIETY and  
NGOs in PROMOTING TOLERANCE and NON-DISCRIMINATION”  
AMMAN, JORDAN  
26 OCTOBER 2008**

**HOTEL LE ROYAL, CONFERENCE ROOM “ISHTAR”**

**REPORT**

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
  - the right to obtain education in their own language;
  - 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;
  - 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**

**OSCE, its Missions and Institutions are recommended to:**

- Organize joint efforts of NGOs to increase the number of women who run for political office and support them once they are elected. We believe that women in high-level political positions can have significant impact on the culture of public debate and on the discourse of human rights;
- Encourage OSCE Partner States that are moving towards gender equality;
- Create a network of women's NGOs within the OSCE Partner States aimed at realising gender equality;
- Support the elaboration of actions plans and legislation promoting gender equality.

**OSCE participating States and OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation are recommended to:**

- Recognise the fact that women's struggle for their rights is an invaluable contribution to the advancement of democracy and rule of law;
- Ratify without reservations and enforce all relevant international instruments pertaining to women's rights, in particular the UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and CEDAW Optional Protocol allowing for individual complaints to be submitted to the UN Committee;

- Incorporate international standards related to women's rights into national laws, monitor law implementation practices and ensure that objectives have been achieved;
- 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;
- Particular attention should be given to the necessity to combat domestic violence, including through provision of funding for development of activities that address this issue;
- Adopt legislative and practical measures that facilitate equal access of women to the labour markets in order to achieve economic independence. Promote and foster gender equality in the workplace, especially in higher positions, including equal pay and equality in hiring process;
- Make use of role models and media campaigns in order to break through stereotypes on women;
- Recognise importance of all roles that women choose to play in public and private life;
- Affirmative action, such as quota systems, should be implemented in order to increase the number of women in decision-making positions, in political, social, legal and media sector, at the local, regional, and national level. Such positive measures should be temporary and remain in force until the underlying objectives have been achieved;
- Provide sufficient child caring infrastructures in order to enable women take active part in public and economic life;
- Promote the foundation and the sustainability of NGOs dealing with women's rights and gender issues;
- Abolish gender discrimination in access to educational institutions;
- Adopt curricula and support extra-curricular activities that promote gender equality principles;
- Review education material to reflect that women are equal participants of society;
- Launch awareness raising campaigns addressing gender stereotypes and traditional attitudes;
- Encourage media to counter stereotypes on women that may hinder effective gender equality;
- Recognise that migrant women and refugees are particularly vulnerable groups, and that special policies and measures are required to protect them against discrimination and violence. In this respect, special attention should be placed on trafficked women and domestic workers;
- Ensure that the residence status of migrant women and asylum seekers is not dependent on the status of their partners;

- Freedom of conscience, religion and belief of women should be respected;
- Put an end to all sort of harassment against women human rights defenders and comply with all provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

**NGOs and civil society are recommended to:**

- Uphold gender equality principles within their own internal structures;
- Design special empowerment programs to reach out to girls and women in deprived communities who do not have access to computers, and often lack basic education;
- Encourage religious leaders to promote women's equal rights;
- Establish co-operation between NGOs based in the OSCE region and in the Mediterranean region in order to provide training and capacity-building for women, in particular in the immigrant communities based in Europe;
- Undertake special efforts to empower migrant women to play an important role in their community groups and NGOs.

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

**OSCE, its Missions and Institutions are recommended to:**

- Encourage States to implement commitments adopted during previous OSCE conferences on migration and integration;
- Foster the participation of migrants and of NGOs on migration issues in OSCE events;
- Encourage the establishment of NGOs which provide support and legal aid to migrants in the host countries;
- Assess the difficulties faced by undocumented migrants across the OSCE region;
- Promote the exchange of best practices in the OSCE region and the Partners for Co-operation in the area of migration policies.

**OSCE participating States and OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation are recommended to:**

- Encourage States to formulate and implement migration policies based on the human rights framework, incorporating equal access to employment, education, housing and other social services;
- When developing schemes for legal migration, adopt rights-based, transparent and non-discriminatory legal channels for migration that respond to the real needs of states' economies;
- 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;

- Adopt concerted migration policies from both sides of the Mediterranean taking into account the financial implications of those policies stressing the co-operative aspect rather than the security aspect;
- 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;
- Protect the right to family reunification to all migrant workers, including those employed under temporary or circular migration schemes;
- Ensure that human rights of migrant women and children are protected and respected in host societies;
- Recognise the particular needs of female migrants and propose specific measures to strengthen their integration in host societies;
- Recognise that hundreds of undocumented migrants die every year trying to cross state borders. Urgent action should be taken against organisations and people that organise such unsafe crossing. The OSCE States should establish more mechanisms for legal migration;
- Provide support to transit countries in order to deal with undocumented migration in a humane way;
- Preserve the right to seek asylum, irrespective of contradictory migration policies and agreements between States. Demand that all States respect the Geneva Convention relating to the status of Refugees and all relevant treaties and conventions, and identify and emulate good practices in the field;
- 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;
- Guarantee access to education and healthcare to children of migrants, irrespective of the status of their parents;
- Support the inclusion of migrants in decision-making processes through electoral participation at all levels;
- Give official and public recognition to the contribution of migrants to the economic, cultural, social and demographical spheres in the host societies;
- Consider setting up independent national institutions dealing with the rights of undocumented migrants;
- Provide training for public officials on the legal and administrative status of migrants; raise awareness of public officials dealing with refugees and migrants on the cultural, religious background of refugees and migrants;
- 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;

- Encourage, support the work and politically involve self-aid and advocacy organizations of immigrants and other local NGOs;
- Facilitate the work of existing local NGOs dealing with migration issues, taking their views into account when developing migration policy.

**NGOs and civil society are recommended to:**

- Create and strengthen networks of migrants' NGOs;
- Develop programs to empower immigrants through human rights education, capacity building of community based organisations;
- Empower immigrants' communities and facilitate their interaction with all levels of authority;
- Raise awareness of the general population of the host societies about the rights of migrants and the necessity for respect;
- Educate the media on migrants' rights and migration issues and encourage unbiased reporting;
- Promote tolerance and understanding amongst all communities through sports and cultural events.

**Working group 3: Intercultural dialogue as a conflict prevention tool**

*All recommendations of the two previous groups, if implemented, will contribute towards an inclusive society and therefore be instrumental in preventing conflict. However, there are some specific recommendations to be added:*

**OSCE, its Missions and Institutions are recommended to:**

- Acknowledge the specific asset of youth engaged in the fight against intolerance, encourage and facilitate its involvement in decision making process; build the capacity of youth organizations and leadership;
- Support efforts to revise history books to depict history in an unbiased and accurate manner;
- Facilitate the exchange of best practices in multicultural education;
- Monitor and report on violations of freedom of thought, expression and conscience within the OSCE region and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.

**OSCE participating States and OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation are recommended to:**

- In cooperation with communities, develop and adequately fund integrated and multicultural schools and programs in order to promote mutual respect and understanding, as well as a common Mediterranean identity where relevant;
- Ensure inclusive educational systems do not use any teaching material and curricula that contains discriminatory elements or language inciting to violence;

- Promote teaching about religions, beliefs and cultures in formal education;
- Foster the dissemination of extra-curricular activities promoting mutual respect and understanding and teaching about diversity;
- Support and facilitate NGOs that work on dialogue among cultures and religions and/or on human rights and anti-racism in order to promote a culture of tolerance and respect for diversity through cooperation and mutual understanding;
- 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;
- Reach out to leaders and key figures in the minorities' communities in order to involve them in the process of inter-cultural dialogue. They could be the change catalysts in their communities;
- Ensure that anti-discrimination laws cover all possible grounds for discrimination, as recognised by international human rights standards;
- 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;
- Actively support co-operation between Jewish and Muslim NGO's to fight anti-Semitism and hate against Muslims in their respective countries;
- Encourage the establishment of common media across the Mediterranean Region as a forum of dialogue of cultures, societies, elites and governments;
- De-penalize homosexuality and abolish articles in the Criminal codes in which homosexual practice appears as a crime.

**NGOs and civil society are recommended to:**

- Consistently cooperate with relevant national authorities in developing and delivering tolerance and non-discrimination educational and training programmes;
- Use the Internet (forums, chats and blogs) to promote tolerance and non-discrimination;
- Co-operate with law enforcement officials to raise their awareness of minorities' issues and ensure their understanding of cultural differences;
- Groups, individuals and NGO's encouraging anti-Semitism and Hate against Muslims should be engaged in order to counter these activities;
- In order to effectively counter hate speech against Muslims, it is important to establish information and resource centres, drawing on good practices of NGOs monitoring and countering anti-Semitism.

