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**Roundtable on the contemporary forms of racism and  
xenophobia affecting people of African Descent in the  
OSCE region**

**Vienna**

**10 November 2011**

**Summary Meeting Report**

**Warsaw, 7 February 2012**

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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION

A roundtable discussion on contemporary forms of racism and xenophobia affecting people of African Descent in the OSCE region was held in Vienna on 10 November 2011, immediately before the opening of the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting (SHDM) on prevention of racism, xenophobia and hate crimes through educational and awareness-raising initiatives. The roundtable, organized by ODIHR, brought together representatives from 15 civil society organizations which work directly with and/or advocate on behalf of people of African descent in the area.<sup>1</sup>

The aim of the roundtable was to explore the issues affecting people of African descent in the OSCE area. The focus of the half-day event was four-fold; the meeting:

- Provided civil society representatives who work in this field with the opportunity to network and exchange professional experiences;
- Sought to increase the awareness of contemporary issues facing people of African descent in the OSCE area;
- Produced a series of recommendations on how to prevent and respond to manifestations of intolerance and discrimination targeting people of African descent in the OSCE area; and
- Highlighted key issues for participants to raise at the SHDM.

The attendees discussed a variety of issues of special concern to people of African descent, including discrimination in the workplace and in education, policing policies, political representation, immigration and related issues, and hate crimes. The participants formulated recommendations for action targeted at OSCE participating States, OSCE institutions and civil society organizations.

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<sup>1</sup> A full list of participants may be found in the annex.

The roundtable and the SHDM also served to celebrate 2011 as the International Year for People of African Descent, as proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly.

The context for the roundtable meeting was that despite the OSCE's strong commitment to promoting tolerance and ending discrimination, the problems of racism and xenophobia still threaten social cohesion and the security of States and individuals, including people of African descent, across the OSCE area. ODIHR's annual hate crimes report, for example, documents that racism, xenophobia, and intolerance continue to be manifested in acts of violence against peoples of African descent as well as African Muslim communities and other social groups.<sup>2</sup>

To prevent and combat such forms of intolerance, OSCE participating States have created a robust normative framework. The 1991 Moscow<sup>3</sup> and 1994 Budapest Documents<sup>4</sup>, as well as subsequent Ministerial Council decisions on tolerance and non-discrimination<sup>5</sup>, condemn discrimination on the basis of race, color, or ethnicity, and towards migrants. The 2007 Ministerial Council Decision on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, for example, encourages participating States to establish national institutions or specialized bodies to combat intolerance and discrimination and to develop and implement national strategies and action plans in these fields. The 2009 Ministerial Council Decision on Combating Hate Crimes<sup>6</sup> tasks ODIHR to provide expertise and assistance to participating States in combating hate crimes, racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance.

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<sup>2</sup> *Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region – Incidents and Responses: Annual Report for 2009*. 16 November 2010. Online access to the report is available at <http://www.osce.org/odihr/73636>.

<sup>3</sup> "Document of the Moscow Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe", Moscow, 1991, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/14310>.

<sup>4</sup> "Budapest Document 1994: Towards a Genuine Partnership in a New Era", Budapest, 5-6 December 1994, <http://www.osce.org/mc/39554>.

<sup>5</sup> Ministerial Council Decision No. 10/05, "Tolerance and Non-Discrimination: Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding, Ljubljana, 6 December 2005, [http://www.osce.org/documents/mcs/2005/12/17441\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/documents/mcs/2005/12/17441_en.pdf); Ministerial Council Decision No. 4/03, "Tolerance and Non-Discrimination", Maastricht, 2 December 2003, <http://www.osce.org/mc/19382>.

<sup>6</sup> Ministerial Decision No. 9/09, "Combating Hate Crimes", Athens, 2 December 2009, <http://www.osce.org/cio/40695>.

In line with its mandate, ODIHR provides support to participating States through a series of initiatives and capacity building programmes.<sup>7</sup> The ODIHR also works to build the capacity of civil society organizations and other non-State actors to combat intolerance and discrimination and regularly convenes roundtables, workshops and conferences which bring together various stakeholders to discuss these issues and share best practices.

## II. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

The roundtable was co-facilitated by Mr. Robert Berkeley, Executive Director of the Runnymede Trust<sup>8</sup> and Mr. Larry Olomofe, ODIHR Advisor for Combating Racism and Xenophobia. It was structured into three working sessions: an introductory session, a working session aimed at exploring common challenges and a final session focused on proposing recommendations. This section provides an overview of the discussions which took place during the introductory session and the working session. Participant recommendations can be found in the following section.

### *Introductory Session*

During the introductory session, participants met in pairs to discuss their professional experiences. They were encouraged to focus on a number of thematic issues, including the demographics of people of African descent living within their countries of residence, the percentage of individuals within this group who are migrants and the nature of media coverage of people of African descent. Most importantly, participants also discussed some of the major challenges facing people and communities of African descent and how these might be overcome. During the subsequent roundtable discussion, participants were asked to report back to the larger group.

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<sup>7</sup> One such programme is ODIHR's Training against Hate Crimes for Law Enforcement (TAHCLE). Further information on the programme is available at <http://www.osce.org/odihr/77457>. ODIHR has also developed a series of tools for educators on combating racism and xenophobia, including the recently released *Guidelines for Educators on Countering Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims: Addressing Islamophobia through Education*. For more information, including information on how to download an electronic version of the document, please refer to <http://www.osce.org/odihr/84495>.

<sup>8</sup> More information on the Runnymede Trust can be found at <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/>.

Participants found that while there are a number of common challenges facing people of African descent within the OSCE area, there are also some divergent experiences. In a number of countries, including in Eastern Europe and Scandinavia, people of African descent represent a small minority of the overall population. In some countries, people of African descent are largely foreign born; in others, communities of African descent have been present for a number of generations.

### ***Working Session II: Key Themes and Issues***

Despite the demographic divergences among communities of African descent in the OSCE area, a number of common themes and challenges emerged during the discussions. These themes were further explored during the second working session, a summary of which can be found below.

***Solidarity, Self-Respect and the Importance of a Trans-African Identity:*** Some participants expressed the view that the African diaspora is globally fragmented and people of African descent do not have a common identity as trans-Africans because of the legacy of colonialism. They supported initiatives which help to forge a trans-African identity and increase solidarity amongst peoples of African descent. Participants also emphasized the importance of solidarity among all marginalized communities, including Roma, refugees and asylum seekers.

***Education, Alienation and Discrimination:*** In the area of curricula reform and development, many participants considered that there is a lack of information on the history of peoples of African descent throughout the OSCE area and that school curricula do not address this issue. A number of speakers also denounced racist violence and stereotypes in the educational setting.

***Discrimination:*** Participants expressed concern regarding discrimination facing people of African descent in the areas of employment, housing and education. Speakers pointed out that employment discrimination has forced many people of African descent into self-

employment, underemployment and unemployment. Discrimination in housing, they said, has resulted in housing segregation and “ghettoization” in a number of countries. While countries in the OSCE area do have anti-discrimination legislation, participants noted that weak implementation and enforcement are hindrances to progress in this area.

***Policing Practices and Policy:*** Racial (or ethnic) profiling by law enforcement was identified by participants as a serious concern. In a number of countries, speakers said, such practices have resulted in a breakdown of trust between people of African descent and the police.

***The Delivery of and Access to Justice:*** There was general consensus among participants that people of African descent face substantial barriers in accessing justice, from their interactions with law enforcement agencies to their treatment by criminal justice systems. They considered this to be a particular problem in the realm of hate crimes investigations and prosecution. Participants provided a number of examples of racially motivated attacks which have not been investigated in their countries of residence.

***A Lack of Political Participation and Representation:*** Many participants expressed the view that people of African descent face institutional and political exclusion at the local, national, regional and international levels. In the European context, they believe there is a lack of national and regional organizations that advocate on behalf of people of African descent. In countries where people of African descent are predominantly new immigrants, in particular in Eastern European and Scandinavian countries, they face substantial barriers in organizing politically and influencing public policy.

***Immigration, Status and Issues regarding Sanctuary and Asylum:*** In a number of countries, participants agreed, people of African descent face challenges as a result of increasingly restrictive immigration and asylum policies. These policies, combined with an increase in political rhetoric based upon “scapegoating”, have posed barriers for people of African descent in their attempts to integrate and participate in public life.

***Hate Crimes and Racist-Based Violence:*** Participants noted an increase in racially motivated attacks in their countries of residence, including a notable increase in attacks against asylum seekers and migrants in Eastern European countries where right-wing parties and youth groups are becoming more active. Participants expressed interest in attending capacity building training for civil society groups working with people of African descent in order to develop their ability to respond to and combat hate crimes more effectively.

### III. SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

During the final working session, participants were asked to propose recommendations and describe good practices. The following bullets summarize recommendations made by participants directed toward a variety of actors, including participating States, OSCE institutions and other civil society organizations. The recommendations were not formally adopted and have no official status. Nevertheless, participants considered that the recommendations provided useful suggestions for possible action and to raise at the subsequent SHDM.

***Recommendations to OSCE Participating States:***

- Participating States should review educational curricula and teaching materials to ensure that they address the history of people of African descent, including the history of the transatlantic slave trade.
- Participating States should provide educators with training on how to address racism and xenophobia in the classroom, including training on how to combat intolerance when it is practiced by educators themselves.
- Participating States should support the creation of a regional body dedicated to addressing issues affecting people of African descent in the OSCE area.
- Participating States should increase their efforts to commemorate the memory of those who were enslaved during the transatlantic slave trade, including designating national days of commemoration.



- Participating States should support initiatives which serve to integrate asylum seekers and immigrants.
- Participating States should uphold their obligations to prohibit racial discrimination and eradicate all forms of racial (or ethnic) profiling conducted by law enforcement agencies.
- Participating States should implement effective police oversight through appropriate mechanisms and ensure that people of African descent are included as members of community oversight structures.
- Participating States should ensure that anti-discrimination legislation is enforced and that people of African descent have access to appropriate remedies when they have been subject to discrimination.
- Participating States should ensure that service providers receive anti-discrimination training.
- Participating States should ensure that foreign professionals are able to utilize their professional qualifications through labour support and professional certification programs and policies.
- A Ministerial Council Decision should be adopted condemning racism and xenophobia with an emphasis placed on people of African descent.

***Recommendations to OSCE Institutions:***

- ODIHR should conduct a series of anti-discrimination and hate crimes awareness and capacity building training sessions for civil society organizations which work with people of African descent. Such training should include a component on the specific issues and challenges facing this vulnerable group.
- ODIHR should create a web portal on people of African descent which would feature information on African descendant communities throughout the OSCE, a list of civil society organizations working with and on issues relating to people of African descent, a calendar of activities, and a chat room which would allow users to exchange information.
- ODIHR should engage in an awareness-raising campaign to bring public attention to the issues facing people of African descent in the OSCE area.

- ODIHR should coordinate additional roundtables and/or side events which focus on the unique issues facing people of African descent in the OSCE area.
- A side event focusing on issues affecting people of African descent should be facilitated during the 2012 Human Implementation Dimension Meeting.
- ODIHR should create a database of experts who specialize in anti-racism and the promotion of racial equality.
- ODIHR should gather and publish best practices by participating States and civil society which promote racial equality in the OSCE area.

***Recommendations to Civil Society:***

- Civil society organizations working with people of African descent should strengthen transnational networks and share best practices in combating racism and discrimination.
- Capacity building training should be conducted with African descendant communities, in particular surrounding issues relating to police monitoring and accountability.

**IV. PARTICIPANT EVALUATION**

Participants were provided with the opportunity to evaluate the roundtable both orally and in writing. At the conclusion of the roundtable, the majority of participants expressed their view that the event was both a unique and a positive experience. They agreed that there is a lack of networking opportunities for civil society organizations which work in this field. As a result, participants expressed their overwhelming support for a number of follow-up initiatives, both in the realm of capacity building and awareness-raising, as set out in the recommendations section above.

Participants were also asked by e-mail to provide further feedback. Their responses were very positive, acknowledging the importance of the roundtable. All participants mentioned that the roundtable was the first of its kind that brought together people of African descent in the OSCE region to discuss issues affecting their communities. All participants hoped that this would be the first of many such gatherings. They also appreciated the opportunity to raise issues of concern and share their experiences with representatives of governments during the subsequent SHDM.

V. ANNEX: List of Participants

<b>Name</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Position</b>
1. Mr. Mamadou Jallow	Sweden	Afroswedese Association	International Student Advisor
2. Ms. Diallo Rokhaya	France	Les Indivisibles	
3. Mr. Eyachew Tefera	Slovenia	Institute for African Studies	
4. Mr. Gibril Deen	Hungary	Mahatma Gandhi Human Rights Organisation	
5. Mr. Luis Valencia	Spain	International Commission for Human Rights of the Black Community	President
6. Dr. Abdramane Keita	Moldova	African Society, FATIMA	
7. Ms. Françoise Verges	France	Slavery Historical Committee	President
8. Ms. Karima Zahi	United Kingdom	N/A	Independent Consultant
9. Ms. Salome Mbugua	Ireland	African Women's Network	Founder
10. Mr. Charles Asante-Yeboah	Ukraine	African Centre	
11. Ms. Joia Nuri	United States of America	Transafrican Forum	
12. Mr. Robert Berkley	United Kingdom	The Runnymede Trust	Executive Director
13. Mr. Chibo Onyeji	Austria	ENAR Foundation	President
14. Mr. Hedvig Bvumburah	Malta	SOS Malta	
15. Mrs. Doreen Lawrence	United Kingdom	The Stephen Lawrence Trust	Founder/External Director

