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SUMMARY REPORT
OF THE
OSCE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING
ON

**Confronting Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in
Public Discourse**

Vienna, 27-28 October 2011

Warsaw, 7 February 2012

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION

The OSCE high-level meeting “Confronting Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in Public Discourse” was held in Vienna on 28 October 2011. The meeting was co-organized by the Chairmanship-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). The meeting was the third and final high-level meeting in a series dedicated to exploring certain forms of intolerance with a view to producing effective strategies and best practices for action.¹

The meeting provided a forum for representatives of OSCE participating States, the media, and political and civil society actors to explore the role that media and political representatives can play in promoting non-discrimination, mutual understanding and respect for diversity. In addition, it aimed to raise awareness of the extent of anti-Muslim sentiment in public discourse and its impact on both individual security and social cohesion. Finally, meeting participants were asked to identify practical measures and good practices for use by participating States and other key actors.

A total of 161 participants registered, including 41 civil society representatives and four international organization representatives. Participants came from 42 participating States and three OSCE Partners for Co-operation.

The OSCE acknowledges the specificities of different forms of intolerance and discrimination, while at the same time recognizing their similarities and the importance of taking a comprehensive approach that addresses cross-cutting issues. In this context, Muslims and Muslim communities can be the subject of multiple forms of intolerance and discrimination, including in public discourse. While criticisms of religions or religious practices can be legitimate speech, criticisms that cross the line into hate speech or incitement to violence are particularly problematic and raise complex legal issues². Unfortunately, public discourse on Islam often tends to portray Muslims as a monolithic group, which is alien and threatening.

¹ The first high level meeting in the series “Confronting Anti-Semitism in Public Discourse” was held in Prague on 23-24 March 2011. More information regarding the meeting, including a copy of the meeting report can be found at http://www.osce.org/event/antisem_2011. The second meeting, “Preventing and Responding to Hate Crimes against Christians”, took place in Rome on 12 September 2011. Further information, including a copy of the meeting report, can be obtained at http://www.osce.org/event/christians_2011.

² International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, articles 19 and 20.

The OSCE recognized the danger of growing public intolerance and discrimination against Muslims as early as 2002, in a Ministerial Council decision which firmly condemned such acts of discrimination.³ This Ministerial Council Decision has been expanded on in a number of commitments, which condemn acts of discrimination and violence against Muslims⁴, reject association of terrorism with any particular religion or culture⁵, and call for increased awareness-raising measures to prevent intolerance and discrimination, including against Muslims⁶. Moreover, in the 2007 Cordoba Declaration on Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, the Chairperson-in-Office underlined that this specific form of intolerance and discrimination should be regarded with utmost concern and suggested a range of mechanisms and tools to support the efforts of participating States and civil society to counter it.⁷

Despite these efforts, anti-Muslim expressions in political discourse and the media continue to be a matter of concern. Given the OSCE's commitments and expertise in this area, the organization is well-positioned to provide a forum for discussion on this topic.

The high level meeting commenced with an opening session, which was followed by three working sessions:

- Session I addressed anti-Muslim prejudices and stereotypes and other manifestations of anti-Muslim intolerance that are prevalent in public discourse across the OSCE region;
- Session II explored the impact of anti-Muslim discourse on Muslim communities, broader society and regional security throughout the OSCE area;
- Session III aimed at proposing effective ways to combat intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in public discourse, intending to showcase some practical examples of good practice.

³ OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 06 on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, 7 December 2002 (MC.(10) DEC./6).

⁴ OSCE Permanent Council Decision No. 621 on Tolerance and Fight against racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, 29 July 2004, (PC.DEC/621).

⁵ OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 06 on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, 7 December 2002 (MC.(10) DEC./6).

⁶ OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 13/06 on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, 5 December 2006 (MC.(13) DEC./6).

⁷ OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Declaration on the Cordoba Conference concerning Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, 10 October 2007 (CIO.GAL/155/07/Rev.1).

Ambassador Adil Akhmetov, Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, moderated the **Opening Session**⁸.

Welcoming participants to the meeting, Ambassador Johannes Kyrle, Secretary General for Foreign Affairs of Austria, used his opening remarks to highlight the importance of freedom of religion or belief and interfaith dialogue in countering intolerance and discrimination against Muslims. In this regard, he provided information about a number of good practices supported by Austria. Recent initiatives include its support for the Conference for European Imams and Religious Advisors and the first Arab-European Young Leaders Forum in 2010. Ambassador Kyrle also mentioned Austria's plans to host the Fifth Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) in Vienna in 2013.

In his opening speech, Ambassador Evaldas Ignatavičius, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, expressed the commitment of the Lithuanian Chairperson-in-Office to address intolerance and discrimination in its all forms. He noted the Chairperson's involvement in co-organizing the high-level meeting and the two previous high-level meetings during 2011 which focused on anti-Semitism in public discourse and hate crimes against Christians. All three meetings sought to engage multiple actors and produce concrete recommendations for action. Ambassador Ignatavičius outlined certain characteristics of intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, and underscored that this form of intolerance is often manifested in combination with racism, xenophobia, anti-immigrant sentiments and religious intolerance.

The Secretary General of the OSCE, Ambassador Lamberto Zannier, highlighted that intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, as a transnational phenomenon, requires collective and co-operative international and regional responses. To achieve this purpose, the OSCE has adopted commitments rejecting the identification of terrorism with any particular religion or culture, condemning acts of violence and discrimination against Muslims, and calling on participating States to conduct educational activities to reduce anti-Muslim prejudices.

In his keynote address, Ambassador Janez Lenarčič, the Director of ODIHR, elaborated on the challenge of finding an appropriate balance between freedom of expression and the principle of non-discrimination. While recognizing that speech that incites "discrimination, hostility or violence" on religious, national or racial grounds should be criminalized under international human rights standards, he warned that criminalization of hate speech can also be used against vulnerable communities, and can impede the robust debate which is necessary in a democratic society. Ambassador Lenarčič emphasized the importance of

⁸ The full text of the speeches made during the opening session can be found in Annex II.

education in creating a climate where diversity is not only tolerated but also valued. In this regard, he presented the recently-issued *Guidelines for Educators on Countering Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, Addressing Islamophobia through Education*⁹ as a useful tool for participating States. Co-published by the ODIHR, the Council of Europe and UNESCO, the guidelines are the first of their kind to address the specific characteristics of intolerance against Muslims within the school context and offer practical recommendations for educators.

Ambassador Ömür Orhun, Special Advisor to the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), underlined the need to counter all attempts to “play” one religious community against another, to propagate the supremacy of a single culture over others or to fuel “a clash of civilizations”. He also called for increased international co-operation to promote respect for human rights and mutual understanding.

The final keynote address was delivered by Mr. Matteo Mecacci, Chair of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions. Mr. Mecacci focused on the impact of the “Arab Spring” and noted that there are misperceptions that Muslim majority societies are unfit for democracy. He underlined that such biased views are not only a product of the rise of populist or extremist political parties, but are also directly or indirectly promoted by some public institutions in the OSCE area.

Session I focused on the manifestations of intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in public discourse. Participants pointed out that there is a tendency to represent Muslims as a monolithic group of people, which is incapable of valuing the principles of democracy and human rights. Islam is often portrayed as a violent ideology rather than a religion. Speakers raised concerns over the shift of anti-Muslim rhetoric from far-right groups to the mainstream of public discourse. Many specific themes that were discussed, including the use of misguided terms and images about Islam, the dissemination of conspiracy theories and the application of double standards in media coverage of different forms of violent extremism, with Islamic groups more likely to be portrayed as supporters of terrorism. Participants also underlined the need to clarify the line between freedom of expression and manifestations of intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in public discourse.

Session II focused on exploring the impact of anti-Muslim discourse. Participants gave particular attention to the context within which acts of violence and discrimination take

⁹ The Guidelines were co-authored by the ODIHR, UNESCO and the Council of Europe and are intended for use by educators in primary and secondary education, and in the formal and non-formal sectors. For more information regarding the Guidelines, including information on how to download an electronic version of the document, please refer to <http://www.osce.org/odihr/84495>.

place. Some participants suggested that anti-Muslim discourse has a disproportionate impact on Muslim women and youth throughout the OSCE area. With this in mind, speakers stressed the role education can play in combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims. Finally, a number of interventions emphasized the responsibility of political and religious leaders to denounce all forms of intolerance unambiguously and consistently.

Session III was dedicated to sharing good practices and gathering a set of recommendations on how to prevent and respond to intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in public discourse. A number of speakers recommended building the capacity of media professionals to engage in unbiased research and reporting. Other interventions proposed more effective sharing of resources and best practices, such as interfaith parliamentary and community initiatives. Participants also discussed ways of addressing hate speech and reforming hate crime legislation.

During the **Closing Session**, Ambassador Renatas Norkus, Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council, thanked participants for their contributions and re-affirmed the Chairperson-in-Office's commitment to combating intolerance against Muslims, in particular through education and awareness-raising measures. Noting ODIHR's experience in combating manifestations of intolerance and discrimination, he encouraged participating States to coordinate with and draw upon ODIHR's expertise. Finally, while underscoring the responsibility of participating States to combat intolerance and discrimination, Ambassador Norkus also noted the valuable role played by other stakeholders, including the media and religious leaders.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section contains a selection of the wide-ranging recommendations made by participants. The recommendations are addressed to a variety of actors, including OSCE participating States and OSCE institutions and field operations, as well as other international organizations, civil society organizations and the media. These recommendations have no official status and are not based on consensus. The inclusion of recommendations in this report does not suggest that they reflect the views or policy of the OSCE.

General Recommendations to participating States:

- Participating States should support educational initiatives to counter manifestations of intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in public discourse.
- Participating States should review and revise educational curricula to ensure that the history of Islam is taught in an unbiased manner.
- Participating States should integrate human rights standards and practices into educational courses.
- Participating States should develop and implement media literacy courses for students in primary and secondary schools, to enhance their ability to analyse and evaluate information in the media.
- Participating States should utilize ODIHR's *Guidelines for Educators on Countering Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, Addressing Islamophobia through Education*.
- Participating States should provide financial support for ODIHR's activities dealing with intolerance and discrimination against Muslims.
- Political and religious leaders should consistently condemn all forms of intolerance, including hate crimes and incidents against Muslims.
- Participating States should consider developing codes of conduct for political representatives to encourage them to condemn hate speech and acts of bias-motivated violence, and to refrain from making intolerant statements.

- Participating States should ensure that public broadcasting services avoid stereotyping of individuals and groups, and report fairly on individuals and groups in conformity with the highest professional and ethical standards including during election periods and public gatherings.
- Participating States should ensure the swift and effective implementation of United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18 on Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief.¹⁰
- Participating States should implement effective measures, including the adoption of legislation to prohibit speech which incites violence, hatred or discrimination against an individual based upon his or her protected characteristics. In order to uphold freedom of expression, such legislation should clearly and narrowly define unacceptable speech in accordance with international law and standards, while protecting all other forms of expression.
- Participating States should encourage constructive public debate on the political and social exclusion of Muslims, by promoting joint partnerships and genuine dialogue on issues regarding integration, freedom of religion or belief, counter-terrorism and discrimination.
- Participating States should consult and work with inter-faith advisors and community groups.
- Inter-faith initiatives, in particular those involving youth, should be supported and encouraged.
- Parliaments should consider establishing inter-faith groups along the lines of the United Kingdom's All Party Parliamentary Inter-Faith Group.
- Parliaments should consider establishing all-party parliamentary committees against Islamophobia. The United Kingdom's All Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia can serve as a model of good practice.

¹⁰ United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/16/18, Adopted on 24 March 2011. To access the full text of the resolution, please refer to <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/G11/121/55/PDF/G1112155.pdf?OpenElement>.

- Participating States should uphold their commitments in the area of freedom of religion, anti-discrimination and freedom of expression.
- Participating States should review their policies regarding the registration of religious denominations, the construction of places of worship and the public display of religious symbols to ensure they are applied in a non-discriminatory manner and that they are in line with their obligations to respect freedom of religion or belief.
- Participating States should fulfill their obligations to provide adequate protection to Muslim places of worship, cultural and educational centres and cemeteries.
- Participating States should conduct hate crime and hate speech awareness-raising activities targeting educators, law enforcement personnel and officials working in the field of justice. Members of these key sectors should be encouraged to work in co-operation to prevent and combat hate crimes and hate speech.
- Participating States should fight intolerance and discrimination, as well as hate incidents and crimes against Muslims, with the same determination as they would combat hatred against members of other religious communities.
- Co-operation and trust between law enforcement officers and Muslim communities should be enhanced as a means of preventing and responding to hate crimes against these communities.
- Ethnic or racial profiling by law enforcement, security and intelligence sectors should be prohibited and anti-terrorism legislation and measures should be in full compliance with international human rights standards.
- Participating States should ensure that Muslims in detention centres and prisons are protected from discrimination based on religion.
- Participating States should ensure that the recommendations proposed during the high level meeting and the 2006 Roundtable Meeting on the Representation of Muslims in Public Discourse¹¹ are fully implemented.

¹¹ Report of OSCE-ODIHR Roundtable, Representation of Muslims in Public Discourse, (Warsaw, 9 May 2006), available at <http://www.osce.org/odihr/23561>.

Recommendations to the OSCE, its institutions and field operations, as well as other international organizations:

- ODIHR should develop awareness-raising programmes to counter manifestations of intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in political discourse and the media.
- ODIHR, in cooperation with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFOM), should develop model codes of conduct for media professionals.
- ODIHR, in cooperation with the RFOM, should collect best practices and develop guidelines on combating intolerant and hate speech against Muslims in the media and public discourse.
- Transnational training programmes for members of the media should be supported. Training components should include training on inter-cultural awareness, research and dialogue, and the building of transnational professional networks.
- ODIHR should support civil society in monitoring, reporting on and countering discriminatory coverage in the media, including on the Internet, in particular through monitoring of and reporting on Islamophobic speech.
- Training initiatives should be conducted with the judiciary regarding hate crimes, and hate speech, with a focus on the balance between freedom of expression and the right to be free from discrimination.
- ODIHR should ensure that the *Guidelines for Educators on Countering Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, Addressing Islamophobia through Education* are translated into the official languages of OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation.
- ODIHR should conduct hate crime awareness raising training programmes targeting civil servants, journalists and other members of the media, civil society organizations, prosecutors, law enforcement and other officials working in the justice sector.
- The OSCE Ministerial Council should adopt a comprehensive and substantive decision on countering intolerance and discrimination in public discourse.
- The OSCE Ministerial Council should adopt a decision on combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims.

- The ODIHR should organize an expert meeting dedicated to exploring the recommendations proposed and submitted by participants during the high-level meeting with a view to ensuring that recommendations are implemented.
- During their official country visits, the Personal Representatives of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on tolerance issues should meet with representatives of the media and raise awareness of the impact of anti-Muslim discourse.
- The OSCE should reach out to other international organizations with a view to benefiting from existing mechanisms mandated to combat intolerance, including United Nations treaty bodies.

Recommendations to Civil Society:

- Proactive media strategies should be developed in order to provide journalists with reliable information on Muslim communities and on the prevailing anti-Muslim stereotypes in the society.
- Civil society organizations should utilize interfaith and intercultural dialogue to counter prejudices about Muslims in public discourse.
- Inter-faith and inter-communal initiatives and coalitions should be strengthened. Faith-based groups should focus their lobbying efforts on common issues which may affect all vulnerable communities.
- Civil society organizations should monitor hate speech and hate crimes against Muslims. In addition, they should coordinate their monitoring efforts.
- Religious leaders should speak out and condemn all forms of intolerance, including hate crimes and hate speech targeting Muslims.

Recommendations to Representatives of the Media:

- **Representatives** of the media should strive to enhance the knowledge and understanding of prejudices and stereotypes about Muslims in the OSCE region and should address media misrepresentation of Islam and Muslims through programmes and projects on media literacy.
- **Representatives** of the media should engage in training programmes aimed at cultural literacy and cultural awareness.

- **Representatives** of the media should participate in joint training programmes with media professionals from other regions and work to build transnational networks, to share best practices and resources.
- Media **representatives** should utilize the *Global Expert Finder*, the UNAOC online database for journalists.¹²
- Media are encouraged to develop professional codes of conduct with a view to ensuring fair and objective reporting on Muslim individuals, groups or issues.
- Educational institutions involved in training journalists and other **representatives** of the media should teach courses which address the role that bias, prejudice, and cultural awareness can play in research and reporting.

¹² The online database connects media professional with leading analysts and commentators on inter-cultural issues and crises in addition to posting regular media alerts. For more information, please refer to <http://www.theglobalexperts.org/>.

III. SUMMARY OF THE SESSIONS

SESSION I: Manifestations of Anti-Muslim Prejudice and Stereotypes in Public Discourse

Moderator: **Ms. Floriane Hohenberg**, Head, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Department, ODIHR

Speakers: **Ms. Emine Bozkurt**, Member of European Parliament, Socialist Group, (Netherlands)
Dr. Gudrun Harrer, Senior Editor, Der Standard (Austria)
Mr. Aslambek Aslakhonov, Deputy Chairman, Federation Council Committee for Foreign Affairs (Russian Federation)
Ms. Liz Fekete, Executive Director, Institute of Race Relations, (United Kingdom)

The first plenary session dealt with manifestations of intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in public discourse. The panelists were asked to share their observations on recurring anti-Muslim prejudices and stereotypes in the media and political discourse and to discuss what changes have occurred in the past ten years.

Ms. Emine Bozkurt discussed the use of Islamophobic language in media and political discourse, including such terms as “the Shari’a threat”, “Islamofascism”, “Islamic terrorism”, “the mass migration of Muslims” and “the headscarf problem”, as a means of promoting hatred and fear towards Muslim communities. She noted that double standards were employed by the media in describing acts of violent extremism committed by individuals from different religious and cultural backgrounds. The coverage of the killing of Theo van Gogh in the Netherlands was provided as an example. While this crime was reported as an act committed by a Muslim, the murder of eighty people in Norway was represented as an act of a lunatic or a “lone wolf”. Ms. Bozkurt also noted that anti-Muslim stereotypes also often include gender stereotypes. Muslim women, for example, are often portrayed in popular culture and the media as submissive and ignorant.

Focusing on the widespread nature of intolerant public discourse regarding Muslims, Dr. Gudrun Harrer highlighted that Islamophobia, as a form of cultural racism, is the only form of racism that is accepted as a mainstream opinion in the media. She pointed out that if the

current discourse surrounding Islam were applied to other faiths or faith-based communities it would be regarded as unacceptable. Dr. Harrer explained that stereotypes and misconceptions about Islam are spread through a process of historical selectivity whereby certain components of Islam are highlighted and misconstrued and others are ignored. As an example, Dr. Harrer discussed how the concept of “taqiya”, an Islamic tenet outlining the narrow circumstances when Muslim under threat or persecution are permitted to conceal their religion, has been misused in some Western media to suggest that Muslims are permitted to lie to members of other religions. Some recent media reports, for example, have used the term to describe Iran’s nuclear strategy and lack of transparency. She also noted that there is a tendency to portray conflicts involving Muslims as religious in nature, as is the case with coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Mr. Aslambek Aslakhanov concurred with the observations made by the previous speakers and expressed his concerns about the demonization of Arabs and Chechens as terrorists in American and Russian movies. He explained that biased portrayal of Muslims by the media is built on fears fueled by the lack of mutual understanding among different religious communities. In this regard, he mentioned terrorist attacks in Moscow in 1999 and 2003, Volgograd in 1999 and Beslan in 2004, as well as the flow of large numbers of immigrants into Russia, as major themes of the stereotyping of Muslims. He stressed that in order to counter intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in public discourse, it was important to draw on initiatives that support a positive portrayal of Muslims. For this purpose, he discussed examples of recent public awareness campaigns promoting mutual understanding and respect for religious diversity in Russia. These included the campaign “Many Nations, One Country” and an awareness-raising project titled “We”. Mr. Aslakhanov underlined the importance of partnership between the government, the media and civil society, including religious-based organizations, in creating such publicity about intolerance and discrimination. He stated the official recognition of Islam in Russia played a positive role in this process.

In her presentation, Ms. Liz Fekete expounded on conspiracy theories about Muslims, noting the parallels with anti-Semitic conspiracy theories that were common in the 1930s. She stated that political representatives and the media should do more to educate themselves about the inaccuracy of such conspiracy theories rather than adopting them uncritically. She expressed concern about the fact that intolerance against Muslims has become the acceptable face of racism in Europe. Referring to the responses to the September 11 attacks and the policies on counter-terrorism, she contended that Islam has become a symbol of the threat to Western values. A visible consequence of this change over the past decade is, according to her, the increase in the number of violent attacks against Muslims and property associated with Muslims.

All panelists agreed that in the past ten years anti-Muslim discourse has increased and has gained wider acceptance in mainstream political discourse, whereas it was previously limited to far-right parties. Ms. Fekete asserted that this change has resulted in the institutionalization of discrimination against Muslims and the erosion of key human rights standards. Ms. Bozkurt commented that anti-immigrant discourse in some countries has increasingly targeted people with a Muslim background, creating a perception that all immigrants are Muslims and vice versa. Dr. Harrer drew attention to the use of new media tools, such as the Internet and social networks, by groups disseminating conspiracy theories about Muslims. Mr. Aslakhanov stated that although today there are more guidelines and textbooks raising awareness about violent extremism, anti-Muslim public discourse continues.

Interventions from the floor focused on a number of themes. Among these, many speakers criticized media representation of Islam not as a religion but as a violent ideology, which is portrayed as incompatible with democracy and human rights. Other speakers commented on the dangers and impact of political discourse calling for the restriction of the rights of Muslims. Other speakers opined that while many Muslim organizations strongly condemned the 9/11 terrorist attacks and categorically reject terrorism in all forms, there were not sufficient efforts in the OSCE region to challenge the association of Islam with terrorism and extremism.

Participants also expressed concerns about a number of contemporary initiatives, such as the initiation of a “Burn a Koran Day”, the publication of caricatures insulting to Muslims, the prohibition of the construction of minarets and the banning of the wearing of burkas in public spaces. They noted that mainstream political parties often failed to show leadership and strongly condemn such acts, while the media often underreports incidents of anti-Muslim discrimination. One participant argued that the mainstream political party leaders in Switzerland could have challenged the recent referendum to ban the construction of minarets more strongly, invoking the non-discrimination principles enshrined in the Swiss constitution. Another participant offered the view that Muslims are often portrayed as unwilling to integrate, yet discriminatory practices and policies targeting Muslims act as barriers to integration. In this context, a speaker commented that Muslims are not asking for special privileges but for the enforcement of equal rights.

Some participants also asserted that certain democratic principles – in particular secularism, majority rule, freedom of expression, and protection of minorities’ and women’s rights – are being manipulated in order to demonize Muslims. Muslims and Islam, for example, are often portrayed as threats to democracy and human rights. Several participants also underlined that many Muslim NGOs do not support restrictions on freedom of expression. At the same time, however, these NGOs expect political leaders and the media to show the same sensitivity in discussing discrimination against Muslims as they do when speaking or reporting about

manifestations of other forms of intolerance in public discourse. The need to delineate clearly between freedom of expression and Islamophobic public discourse was mentioned as a challenge.

One intervention called on participating States to increase their efforts to raise awareness of intolerance against Muslims in public discourse, while respecting freedom of expression. Another drew attention to the destruction of Muslim places of worship in conflict and post-conflict areas as a serious concern.

In terms of good practices, a number of initiatives promoting mutual understanding and countering intolerance against Muslims were mentioned. These included the unanimous adoption of United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18 entitled “Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against persons based on religion or belief”.¹³ The Budapest Declaration adopted by the Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament was also identified as a good practice.¹⁴ The declaration denounces all forms of extremism and populism, including ultra-nationalism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. One contribution to the discussion cited the work of international monitoring centres such as the OIC Observatory on Islamophobia, as a good practice.¹⁵ The increasing role played by specialized bodies, such as the Swiss Federal Commission against Racism, in combating Islamophobia was also mentioned.

SESSION II: The Impact of Anti-Muslim Discourse

Moderator: **Dr. Agnès Callamard**, Executive Director, Article 19

Speakers: **Professor Egdūnas Račius**, Head of Department of Regional Studies, Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy, Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania)
Dr. Sabine Schiffer, Director, Media Responsibility Institute in Erlangen (Germany)
Mr. Sergiu Sochirca, Chairperson of the Islamic League of Moldova

During the second plenary session, discussions focused on the impact of anti-Muslim discourse in the OSCE area. Particular attention was paid to the context within which acts of violence and discrimination take place.

¹³ Op cit., note 10.

¹⁴ “The Budapest Declaration of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament”. To obtain a copy of the full text of the declaration, please refer to http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/gpes/media3/documents/3568_EN_Budapest_declaration_EN.pdf.

¹⁵ For more information on the Observatory’s mandate and publications, please refer to http://www.oic-oci.org/page_detail.asp?p_id=182.

Professor Egdūnas Račius expressed his concerns about the monolithic portrayal of and misrepresentation of Islam and Muslims in the educational and media sectors, resulting in the perpetuation of stereotypes and prejudice against Muslims and the marginalization of Muslim minority community members in non-Muslim majority countries. Professor Račius noted that such stereotypes are compounded by a lack of cultural awareness training in formal educational programmes and school curricula, which promotes a predominantly Eurocentric and Orientalist worldview. He advocated that more information on Islam be included in school curricula.

Dr. Sabine Schiffer echoed Professor Račius' views regarding the role education and the media play in perpetuating stereotypes of Muslims in the OSCE area and beyond. She spoke also of the role that political leaders can play in furthering or diminishing intercultural divisions between Muslims and non-Muslims, depending largely on the substance of the messages they convey. Dr. Schiffer commented on the politics of scapegoating, noting that the use of xenophobic statements can serve to deflect public attention from more pressing and relevant political and economic issues, including the responsibility of political leaders to address such issues. On best practice recommendations, Dr. Schiffer diverged from Professor Račius' opinion regarding the need to provide further information regarding Islam in schools. While recognising the need to ensure historical accuracy and provide information about different faiths in the classroom, she argued that it is far more valuable to teach students about the dynamics among racism, power and intercultural awareness. This requires educators and students to develop critical thinking and self-reflection skills. Dr. Schiffer concluded with a number of recommendations for media professionals. Journalists, for example, should be taught to evaluate critically their own biases and to question which facts are relevant when reporting. Finally, she argued that increased media independence is a key step to ensuring increased objectivity in reporting.

The final panelist, Mr. Sergiu Sochirca, spoke of the challenges his organization, the Islamic League of Moldova, has faced in its efforts to have Islam officially recognised in the country and to have the organization formally registered. In the wake of the organization's application, anti-Muslim discourse intensified in the media as a number of prominent political and religious leaders portrayed the Muslim community in a xenophobic manner. Incidents of intolerance against Muslims in Moldova increased, and a number of anti-Muslim rallies and marches were held. While Mr. Sochirca applauded the efforts of the Moldovan government in adopting a moderate position in the face of public unrest, he expressed dismay that some political and religious leaders were not more active in consistently and unambiguously condemning all forms of intolerance.

While the majority of interventions focused on recommendations for civil society and State actors, a number of participants discussed the impact anti-Muslim discourse has on Muslim women and children. One participant commented that Muslim women are disproportionately targeted for harassment and attack. Another asserted that while Muslim women are often the focus of public debate, they are rarely given the opportunity to participate in public discussions. In this regard, some participants advocated that Muslims should be provided with opportunities to represent themselves in the media and in public discourse.

There was also concern expressed that Muslim children are being targeted and marginalized in the classroom. A number of participants applauded the efforts of ODIHR in developing the *Guidelines for Educators on Countering Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, Addressing Islamophobia through Education* and encouraged participating States to adopt and implement the guidelines.

The Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also Focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions, discussed the political discourse surrounding Turkey's bid for membership in the European Union and expressed concern that some debate on the issue has degenerated into a form of intolerance against Muslims. He also expressed concern that there is tendency to falsely conflate terrorism and fundamentalism with Islam, which contributes to prevailing stereotypes in the public realm.

A number of recommendations focused on the investigation and prosecution of hate speech and hate crimes. One participant spoke of the utility of anti-terrorist legislation in combating extremism and discrimination and encouraged specialized training for law enforcement personnel in these key areas. It was also recommended that law enforcement agencies be encouraged to engage in outreach activities with youth and minority community leaders as they are viable sources of intelligence in fighting extremism. In addition to training targeting law enforcement personnel, speakers suggested that prosecutors and judges be provided with training on hate crimes and hate speech.

Finally, participants expressed support for inter-faith initiatives and coalitions as a means of combating religious and racial intolerance and discrimination. One delegation referenced the success of inter-faith youth councils and youth groups and emphasized the importance of engaging youth in building tolerant and inclusive societies.

SESSION III: Effective Responses and Good Practices

Moderator: **Ms. Milica Pesic**, Executive Director, Media Diversity Institute

Speakers: **Lord Nazir Ahmed**, Vice Chair, All Party Parliamentary Inter-Faith Group, (United Kingdom)
Mr. Yusuf Fernandez, President, European Islamic Media Network, (Spain)
Mr. Daanish Masood, Media and Partnerships Officer for the UNAOC

The final plenary session, dedicated to exploring best practices in combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, brought forth a series of recommendations targeting different stakeholders, including civil society organizations and OSCE participating States.

Lord Nazir Ahmed focused his remarks on the history and experiences of the All-Party Parliamentary Inter-Faith Group, of which he is the Vice Chair. Initiated in London in the wake of the terrorist attacks in London and New York, the group aims to develop solidarity among faith communities in the United Kingdom and to inform parliamentarians about effective strategies for combating inter-communal conflict and building inter-faith co-operation. The group has enjoyed particular success due to its cross-party approach. Lord Ahmed encouraged participants to make use of similar parliamentary and inter-faith initiatives, including those at the local level.

Mr. Yusuf Fernandez prefaced his remarks by discussing the history of and current manifestations of Islamophobia in Spain. Outlining the long and rich history that Muslims have enjoyed in the country, he lamented their absence from educational curricula. He expressed concern regarding contemporary public discourse which portrays Muslim community members as “foreigners” rather than full-fledged citizens of the country. Mr. Fernandez underscored the importance of combating Islamophobia through supranational networks which include diverse actors such as the media, politicians, human rights advocates and community representatives. Such networks are valuable in developing a concerted and widespread system of sharing information, disseminating best practices and countering intolerant speech.

Mr. Daanish Masood discussed the UNAOC’s media programme. The programme focuses on three main objectives: the creation and maintenance of an online resource for media professionals¹⁶, the routine dissemination of op-ed articles, audio and video statements and interviews addressing contentious cross-cultural issues and the provision of capacity building training for media professionals. The UNAOC has experienced greater success with training

¹⁶ Op cit., note 12.

for media professionals by their professional counterparts, rather than external trainers from other sectors. Mr. Masood further noted that the UNAOC favours strategies aimed at building the capacity and skill set of journalists and enhancing transnational networks among media professionals, rather than the imposition of guidelines or codes of conduct on members of the media. Mr. Masood concluded his remarks by noting UNAOC's support for a recent study on the media coverage of the construction of a mosque and cultural centre near the "Ground Zero" site in New York City.¹⁷ The study focuses on the predominantly negative and polarizing coverage of the debate surrounding the centre's construction, and seeks to extrapolate lessons regarding how future controversies can be more responsibly covered by members of the media.

Recommendations from the floor were wide-ranging. A number of interventions focused on the need to monitor and improve the ethical and professional conduct of the media. However, there were divergent views about the role regulation and monitoring should play; some participants promoted a self-regulatory approach, while others encouraged the creation of observatories tasked with monitoring the media. A number of participants encouraged ODIHR and the RFOM to take the lead in developing and drafting model codes of conduct for media professionals. Others called on the two OSCE institutions to work together to collect and disseminate best practice guidelines on combating intolerant and hate speech against Muslims in the media and public discourse. One speaker suggested that the RFOM utilize its early warning prevention mechanisms to monitor and identify media outlets which are involved in disseminating intolerant discourse.

Much of the discussion centred on the critical balance between freedom of expression and freedom of the press, on the one hand, and the right to be free from discrimination on the other. In this regard, one participant contended that further work needs to be done in order to build multilateral consensus on the limits on freedom of opinion and expression.

A number of participants favoured strategies focused on skills and capacity building for members of the media. These speakers called on participating States to conduct and support awareness-raising initiatives for journalists, editors and others in the media sector regarding intolerance and prejudice against Muslims. ODIHR was encouraged to conduct training for media professionals and other professional groups such as law enforcement and prosecutors, aimed at raising the awareness of hate speech and hate crimes.

¹⁷ The study was researched by the International Center on Media & the Public Agenda (ICMPA), University of Maryland (USA), and the Gabinete de Comunicación y Educación from (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain), in partnership with the UNOAC and focused on global media coverage of the "Ground Zero Mosque" controversy. For further information on the study, please refer to <http://uncoveringbias.wordpress.com/>.

Education and awareness-raising were repeatedly mentioned as important strategies. One speaker encouraged participating States to integrate human rights standards and values into primary and secondary school curricula. Another expressed dismay that there are not more experts studying the role media discourse plays in exacerbating inter-cultural tension and violence, pointing to a need for academics to study such phenomena. Yet another intervention encouraged the use of government-sponsored campaigns such as the “2011 Hours against Hate”¹⁸ initiative to eradicate racism and other forms of intolerance.

One participant invited the OSCE to organize a follow-up expert meeting focusing on the implementation of the recommendations proposed by participants during the high-level meeting.

Finally, speakers suggested that hate crime and hate speech legislation should be developed and implemented. Participants advocated that stronger, more consistent hate crime laws are needed to hold perpetrators accountable, to act as a deterrent and to ensure justice for victims. One speaker commented that anti-terrorist and anti-extremist legislation can play a valuable role in combating hate speech in the media and on the internet.

¹⁸ For more information about the campaign, please see <http://www.state.gov/s/2011hoursagainsthate/>.

IV. ANNEXES

ANNEX I: Meeting Agenda



Confronting Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in Public Discourse

Vienna, 27-28 October 2011

The Hofburg Congress Center, Neuersaal

Manifestations of intolerance and discrimination in public discourse about Muslims (sometimes referred to as Islamophobic speech) merit serious concern, not least because they increase tensions in society. They also have the potential to legitimize discriminatory practices and fuel acts of violence against individuals, and to create insecurity, exclusion and alienation among Muslim communities. The purpose of this meeting is to explore the role that media and political representatives can play in promoting non-discrimination, mutual understanding and respect for diversity; it also aims to raise awareness of the extent of anti-Muslim expressions in public discourse and its impact on both individual security and social cohesion. Finally, the meeting will identify practical measures and good practice for participating States.

The OSCE acknowledges the specificities of different forms of intolerance and discrimination, while at the same time recognizing the importance of taking a comprehensive approach and addressing cross-

cutting issues. In this context, Muslims and Muslim communities can be the subject of multiple forms of discrimination. Criticisms of religious practices are legitimate speech. However, such criticisms frequently tend to portray Muslims as a monolithic group, which is alien and threatening. Recognizing the danger of stigmatizing speech of this sort, the need to combat intolerance and discrimination against Muslims was first mentioned in an official OSCE document in 2002.¹⁹ This Ministerial Council Decision has been reiterated in a number of commitments, condemning acts of discrimination and violence against Muslims,²⁰ rejecting association of terrorism with any particular religion or culture,²¹ and calling for increased awareness-raising measures to prevent intolerance and discrimination, including against Muslims.²² Moreover, in the 2007 Cordoba Declaration on Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, the Chairperson-in-Office underlined that this specific form of intolerance and discrimination should be regarded with utmost concern and suggested a range of mechanism and tools to support the efforts of participating States and civil society to counter it.²³

Despite these efforts, anti-Muslim expressions in political discourse and the media continues to be a matter of concern. This meeting will provide a forum for representatives of OSCE participating States, the media, political and civil society actors to debate the most pressing issues concerning intolerant and discriminatory public discourse against Muslims. How can manifestations of such discourse be identified and how is it possible to draw the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable speech? How can States prevent and respond to anti-Muslim statements without infringing on the right to free expression and freedom of the media? What is the impact of anti-Muslim discourse on Muslim communities and the rest of the society? What good practices have been developed to confront and combat anti-Muslim expressions without infringing freedom of expression?

The meeting will commence with an opening session followed by three working sessions. Discussions should be interactive, allowing for an exchange between the panelists and the participants.

- The first session will address anti-Muslim prejudices and stereotypes that are prevalent in public discourse across the OSCE region.
- The second session will explore the impact of anti-Muslim discourse on both Muslim communities and the rest of the society.
- The third session will focus on the effective ways to combat intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in public discourse, aiming to showcase some practical examples.

The meeting will result in recommendations based on the good practices highlighted. Hence, participants will be asked to focus on concrete measures that may assist participating States.

¹⁹ OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 06 on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, 7 December 2002 (MC.(10) DEC./6).

²⁰ OSCE Permanent Council Decision No. 621 on Tolerance and Fight against racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, 29 July 2004, (PC.DEC/621).

²¹ OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 06 on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, 7 December 2002 (MC.(10) DEC./6).

²² OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 13/06 on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, 5 December 2006 (MC.(13) DEC./6).

²³ OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Declaration on the Cordoba Conference concerning Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, 10 October 2007 (CIO.GAL/155/07/Rev.1)

A new set of Guidelines for Educators to combat anti-Muslim prejudice, developed jointly by ODIHR, UNESCO and Council of Europe, will be also introduced during the opening session.

PROGRAMME

Thursday, 27 October 2011

18:00 Opening Reception
 Hosted by H.E. Amb. Dr. Johannes Kyrle, Secretary-General for Foreign Affairs
 Austrian Ministry for European and International Affairs
 Minoritenplatz 8, 1010 Vienna

Friday, 28 October 2011

09:30 Registration

10:00 Opening Session

Moderator **H.E. Amb. Adil Akhmetov**, Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims

Speakers **H.E. Amb. Dr. Johannes Kyrle**, Secretary-General for Foreign Affairs, Federal Ministry of Austria for European and International Affairs
H.E. Amb. Evaldas Ignatavičius, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania
H.E. Amb. Lamberto Zannier, Secretary-General, OSCE
H.E. Amb. Janez Lenarčič, Director, OSCE/ODIHR
H.E. Amb. Ömür Orhun, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation
Mr. Matteo Mecacci, Chair of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

10:45 Coffee Break

11:15 Session I: Manifestations of Anti-Muslim Prejudice and Stereotypes in Public Discourse

Recurring anti-Muslim prejudice and stereotypes in the media and political discourse will be discussed. There will be a general overview of the continuing and new trends in the manifestations of intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in public discourse.

Moderator	Ms. Floriane Hohenberg , Head, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Department, ODIHR
Speakers	Mr. Aslambek Aslakhanov , Deputy Chairman, Federation Council Committee for Foreign Affairs (Russian Federation) Ms. Emine Bozkurt , Member of European Parliament, Socialist Group, (Netherlands) Ms. Liz Fekete , Executive Director, Institute of Race Relations (United Kingdom) Dr. Gudrun Harrer , Senior Editor, Der Standard (Austria)
12:45	Lunch
14:15	Session II: The Impact of Anti-Muslim Discourse <i>The consequences of anti-Muslim discourse on the society, including Muslim communities, will be elaborated in the light of recent incidents. Special attention will be paid to the context where the acts of discrimination and hate crimes against Muslims may take place.</i>
Moderator	Dr. Agnès Callamard , Executive Director, Article 19 (United Kingdom)
Speakers	Prof. Egdūnas Račius , Head of Department of Regional Studies, Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy, Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania) Dr. Sabine Schiffer , Director, Media Responsibility Institute (Germany) Mr. Sergiu Sochirca , Chairperson of the Islamic League of Moldova (Moldova)
15:45	Coffee Break
16:15	Session III: Effective Responses and Good Practices: <i>Initiatives at international, regional and national levels to counter intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in public discourse will be illustrated. Participants will discuss how OSCE/ODIHR and other international actors can further support such initiatives.</i>
Moderator	Ms. Milica Pesic , Executive Director, Media Diversity Institute (United Kingdom)
Speakers	Lord Nazir Ahmed , Vice Chair, All Party Parliamentary Inter-Faith Group (United Kingdom) Mr. Yusuf Fernandez , President, European Islamic Media Network (Spain) Mr. Daanish Masood , Media and Partnerships Manager, United Nations Alliance of Civilizations
17:45	Closing Session Key recommendations from sessions

Remarks: **H.E. Amb. Renatas Norkus**, Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council

18:30 End

ANNEX II: Speeches made during the Opening Session

OSCE / ODIHR Conference on “Confronting Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in Public Discourse”

Vienna, 28 October, 2011

Opening Remarks by

the Secretary General for Foreign Affairs of Austria,

Amb. Johannes Kyrle

Mr Chairman-in-Office,

Mr Secretary General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to this high-level meeting of the OSCE on “Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in Public Discourse” here in Vienna. With ODIHR (the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) the **OSCE** has established itself as one of the **key regional players in combating racism, xenophobia and intolerance**. Personally, it makes a lot of sense to me that the OSCE is dealing with this important, delicate and complex issue. Events related to the human dimension have become an indispensable pillar of OSCE activities.

Recent discussions in the OSCE community, also in Warsaw, have shown the **great interest of participating States in the topic** which receives broad attention in the Permanent Council as well as prominent place in the annual Ministerial Meeting. That is also why the Lithuanian Chairmanship has devoted 3 major events to the topic. After the “Conference on **Anti-semitism** in public discourse” organized in **Prague** this March and the “Conference on **Hate Crimes against Christians**” held in **Rome** in September, today’s “Conference on Confronting Intolerance and Discrimination against **Muslims** in Public Discourse“ completes the agenda of this year. Both previous conferences have led to fruitful and intense discussions. I am confident that today’s deliberations will be equally interesting.

I would like to take this opportunity to express **my gratitude and thanks to** the Organization as a whole and, in particular, to **the 3 personal representatives of the Chairman-in-Office**

to promote tolerance and combat racism, xenophobia and discrimination for their dedicated work in this field.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The issue of **religious freedom** has always occupied philosophers, in so far as exclusive claims made by different religions pose an unsolvable dilemma. In the past, this had led to innumerable conflicts and tragedies. At the time of the Enlightenment, religious competition gave way to coexistence and mutual respect. Today, however, given our multi-faceted societies, the question is no longer only of theoretical, but of very tangible practical relevance. Religious and ethnic minorities are a common feature of our societies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

to say it with the French intellectual **André Malraux**: “**The 21st century will be spiritual or it will not be.**” Today’s Conference can make an important contribution as a platform for the identification of existing anti-Muslim prejudices and stereotypes in public discourse, to meet the rising challenge of Islamophobia in our societies and to promote non-discrimination, mutual understanding and respect for diversity.

The “**Arab spring**” has highlighted the meaningfulness of the **Mediterranean partnership for co-operation of the OSCE**, which naturally comprises the **principle of religious tolerance**. On the other hand, recent events in **Egypt** also demonstrated the fragility of our achievements. We have to remain vigilant. In this context, I welcome the swift and unequivocal response of the EU and the OSCE to the aforementioned events. For Austria, this issue is of particular importance and we pay special attention to it also within the framework of the UN Human Rights Council, that we are currently a member of.

Austria’s longstanding commitment to the dialogue of cultures and religions is based on her firm belief that human rights and fundamental freedoms are the common ground on which we stand and that no conflict is too complex to durably resist dialogue. We have to raise awareness on the importance of fighting prejudices and discrimination. It is imperative to strengthen our efforts for integration and to promote inclusive societies.

Austria has always stressed the importance of **dialogue with Islam and Muslims in**

Europe. Only then can we reduce stereotypes and prejudice on both sides and build up a climate of mutual understanding, tolerance and non-discrimination. The particular engagement of **Austria in dialogue with Islam and the Muslim world** has a long tradition. In Austria, Islam was legally recognized with the “**Islam Law**” already in **1912**. The legal status of Islam in Austria is unique in Europe and has contributed to fruitful domestic dialogue relations with the Islamic Religious Communities in Austria. Islam has become the second largest religious community in Austria, ranking after the Catholic Church and before

the Protestant Church. **An estimated half a million people with Islamic belief live in Austria, this makes up 6% of the Austrian population, 250 000 of them are Austrian citizens.**

Beyond legal recognition of Islam, there are many **initiatives in Austria** that demonstrate a positive mutual engagement on all levels:

- The **Austrian Foreign Ministry** has, among other projects, supported the “**Conference of European Imams and Religious Advisors**” (which were held 2003 in Graz, 2006 and 2010 in Vienna) with the aim to facilitate integration of Muslims in Europe.

- Since 2008, The **Austrian Foreign Ministry** has organised “**Training Seminars for Turkish religious representatives in Austria**” on an annual basis in order to motivate and train Imams as “pilots for dialogue” thus promote their own integration and interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

- Another recent initiative launched in Vienna, was **the first Arab-European Young Leaders Forum in November last year**. With this highly successful initiative addressing the challenges for responsible leadership in all fields of society, the **Austrian Foreign Ministry in cooperation with the League of Arab States**, have created a vibrant and sustainable forum to connect young professionals in politics, civil society and business from the EU, Turkey and the Arab world, and to make participants effectively co-operate beyond sectors and borders.

- Let me also mention the **Alliance of Civilizations** in this context as an important platform to reinforce intercultural and interreligious dialogue. As an active member of this Alliance, **Austria will host the fifth annual forum in Vienna in 2013**, most probably in spring.

- Last but not least, **Austria is one of the three founding states besides Saudi Arabia and Spain of the King Abdullah Center for interreligious and intercultural dialogue in Vienna**. The founding treaty was signed on 13 October in Vienna. This is also an acknowledgment of our efforts on interreligious and intercultural cooperation for the promotion of tolerance, understanding and universal respect on matters of freedom of religion or belief and cultural diversity.

Combatting anti-Muslim prejudice is a task which concerns all of us and requires joint actions. I welcome today’s meeting as part of our joint efforts to seek solutions to this most pressing challenge. I wish you a fruitful day of stimulating and interesting discussions and sharing of experience and best practices.

Thank you!

**Opening Statement by the
Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, Mr. Evaldas Ignatavičius
at the Countering Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims
in Public Discourse Conference
28 October, Vienna**

Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Chairperson-in-Office, Foreign Minister Audronius Ažubalis, it is my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to today's OSCE Chairmanship-ODIHR *Conference on Countering Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in Public Discourse*.

This Conference is the third this year addressing hatred, stereotyping, bigotry, as well as action motivated by religious bias and intolerance. The Prague Conference in March 2011 was devoted to anti-Semitism in public discourse while the Rome Conference in September 2011 was designed to address hate crimes against Christians. Today's discussions, aimed at countering Anti-Muslim discourse, reflect the Chairmanship's conviction that constant efforts are required in order to combat racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance and to build mutual understanding and respect for diversity.

We need to create a continuing process of open reflection, enact necessary laws, develop sustainable educational programmes and conduct constant public awareness building, so that this heinous form of human rights violation is eradicated. These conferences are based on a forward-looking approach, seeking to elaborate concrete and practical recommendations. Implementation of these recommendations will require the work of all stakeholders, including government officials, civil society, educational institutions, the media and political representatives. It is only possible to overcome intolerance and discrimination when all key actors engage and pool their efforts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Intolerance and discrimination against Muslims is a complex phenomenon, which often manifests itself in combination with racism, xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiments. Acts of intolerance and discrimination against Muslims are fuelled by a range of stereotypes and prejudices. These include, but are not limited to:

- ancient hatreds and prejudices;
- identification of terrorism and violence with Islam;
- anti-immigrant sentiments;
- chauvinist attitudes toward national minorities with Muslim backgrounds;
- conspiracy theories, such as the "clash of civilizations," which spread the fear of Muslims;

- biased rhetoric charging that Islam itself as incompatible with human rights and democracy.

Although anti-Muslim prejudices are centuries old, it has recently taken new forms. In spite of some tangible progress achieved in fostering interfaith understanding and tolerance, there is still a lack of understanding of the scope of this problem. This is why events such as this one, which seek to address intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in public discourse, are so important.

OSCE participating States have acknowledged the leading role political leaders can play by defusing tensions between groups and condemning violent manifestations of intolerance. While acknowledging the importance of freedom of expression, OSCE participating States have also stressed the role media can play in combating stereotypes. Unfortunately, we have seen too little leadership from the political sphere and from the media when Muslims were subject to assaults. Even worse, we have witnessed that some media and some political parties use anti-Muslim rhetoric with a view to selling more papers, gaining more attention or attracting more votes. We should discuss these challenges openly and in a constructive way.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this conference, we will have the opportunity to take a look at three aspects of anti-Muslim discourse:

- manifestations of intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in the media and political discourse;
- the impact of such manifestations on society in general and the Muslim community in particular; and
- effective ways to counter anti-Muslim public discourse, with the view of promoting mutual understanding and respect, in our increasingly diverse societies.

The meeting provides a forum for representatives of the participating States and other intergovernmental agencies and the media, as well as other political and civil society actors to debate the most pressing issues concerning intolerant and discriminatory public discourse against Muslims. In particular, how can we identify manifestations of intolerance and discrimination in the media and in political speech? What is the link between hate speech and acts of discrimination and violence against certain groups?

What is the impact of new media on disseminating anti-Muslim hatred, hostility and bigotry? How can states prevent and respond to anti-Muslim statements without infringing on the right to freedom of expression? And how can ODIHR support the efforts of political representatives and media professionals to counter anti-Muslim public discourse?

Watching how political actors and societies at large have responded to events such as the “Ground Zero Mosque” debate in the USA, the referendum in Switzerland on the prohibition on building minarets, and the heinous massacres in Norway, provides us with significant food for thought as we seek a deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

I would like to thank the three Personal Representatives of the Chairperson in Office on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination issues Amb. Adil Akhmetov, Rabbi Andrew Baker and Massimo Introvigne, whose efforts to promote tolerance are appreciated very much by the Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship. Let me thank the able ODIHR team, led by Ambassador Lenarčič for helping the chairmanship to organize this conference. Let me also extend our sincere thanks the governments of the United States, Turkey and Austria for providing the funding and support which made this conference possible.

I wish you all productive discussions and a successful conference.

**Opening Statement by OSCE Secretary General
Lamberto Zannier
at the Countering Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims
in Public Discourse Conference
28 October 2011, Vienna**

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I'd like to thank the Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship and ODIHR for organizing this event, which follows similar meetings organized on anti-Semitism and intolerance against Christians.

Our aim today is to focus our attention on the manifestations of intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in public discourse, including in the media and political speech. The working sessions will provide an opportunity to engage in interactive discussions, and to share good practices and lessons learned. Our goal is to reach a better understanding of this phenomenon, and to identify effective preventive and responsive measures, which combat intolerance without endangering freedom of expression. I hope that through our discussions we can pinpoint concrete areas of follow up at the national and international levels.

The promotion of hatred, hostility and bigotry against certain groups, based on their ethnic, national, religious or other characteristics runs counter to the core values of the OSCE community. It constitutes an attack on the "inherent dignity of the individual," which has been the core of the OSCE *acquis* since the Helsinki Final Act. As an organization dedicated to enhancing security in all of its dimensions, the OSCE must consider manifestations of intolerance and discrimination as a real threat. It is against this background that, since 2002, the OSCE has regularly adopted decisions aimed at combating intolerance and discrimination, as a means of conflict prevention and resolution. And this year, the Lithuanian Chairmanship has identified this theme as a priority for the forthcoming Ministerial Council in Vilnius.

The approach of the OSCE recognizes the complexity of intolerance and discrimination, and acknowledges the many ways in which it can be manifested. For this reason, OSCE commitments and meetings organised to monitor their implementation include, in addition to

racism and xenophobia, a specific focus on different forms of intolerance and discrimination, such as today's focus on Islamophobia.

The 2002 Porto Ministerial Decision explicitly condemned the increase in acts of discrimination and violence against Muslims. It firmly rejected the identification of extremism and terrorism with a particular culture and religion.

At the 2006 Brussels Ministerial Council, the OSCE encouraged each participating State to develop appropriate educational responses and awareness-raising measures to reduce anti-Muslim prejudice. With a view to strengthening these efforts, the 2007 Madrid Ministerial Council called for continued efforts by political representatives to strongly reject and condemn manifestations of all forms of intolerance and discrimination, including against Muslims.

Several OSCE meetings and high-level conferences have also focused on this topic. These included the 2005 Cordoba, 2007 Bucharest and 2010 High-Level Conferences, as well as the 2006 Almaty Meeting on Promoting Inter-Cultural, Inter-Religious and Inter-Ethnic Understanding. In October 2007 the Spanish Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE held a conference pertaining exclusively to intolerance and discrimination against Muslims. Today's conference follows up on these initiatives.

Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished participants,

The OSCE views combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, through the promotion of respect for diversity and equality, mutual understanding, as well as inter-cultural and religious dialogue, as an integral part of our conflict prevention and crisis management activities. Demonization, scapegoating and biased rhetoric increase tensions in society, and have the potential to legitimate discriminatory practices and fuel acts of violence.

The events of recent past have reminded us that intolerance and discrimination against Muslims have negative affects not only on the daily lives of Muslim communities, but also on whole societies. Even usually peaceful, democratic and transparent societies are not immune to the devastating impact of hatred and bigotry. This is a transnational phenomenon, which requires collective and co-operative international and regional responses. Improvements in this area can help to strengthen the OSCE's capacities in conflict prevention and crisis management. The networks, training activities and materials provided by the ODIHR, in turn, are important tools that participating States can employ in order to strengthen their efforts to counter intolerance and discrimination against Muslims.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This conference embodies one of the greatest strengths of the OSCE: it brings together people from different backgrounds from across the OSCE region, to share diverse experiences in facing a common challenge, and to work toward practical solutions. I wish you all productive discussions, and a successful conference.

Thank you for your attention.

Opening remarks by

Ambassador Janez Lenarčič

**Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions
and Human Rights (ODIHR)**

at the

OSCE Chairmanship – ODIHR Conference

“Countering Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in Public Discourse”

Hofburg, Vienna

28 October 2011

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to today’s high level meeting “Confronting Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in Public Discourse”. This event is the final meeting in a series co-organized by the Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship and ODIHR and devoted to exploring and countering specific forms of intolerance. The first meeting focused on “Anti-Semitism in Public Discourse” was held in Prague in March. The second on “Hate Crimes and Incidents against Christians” was held in Rome in September.

These meetings have proved highly valuable for a number of reasons. They have brought together diverse stakeholders who have contributed new insights into the complex nature of intolerance and discrimination. They have highlighted practical initiatives to counter these phenomena, initiatives that can be undertaken by various actors including educators, civil society organizations and participating States. Finally, they have reminded us that more needs to be done to ensure that all citizens, irrespective of their cultural or religious backgrounds, can enjoy equality in our societies. I anticipate that today’s discussions, focused on the issue of intolerance against Muslims in public discourse, will be equally fruitful and productive.

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ODIHR's annual report on hate crimes indicates that hatred towards Muslims continues to manifest itself in the form of physical attacks, verbal harassment and threats of violence. Reported cases include physical assaults on women who wear headscarves, the desecration of mosques, cultural and educational institutions as well as cemeteries. These hate-motivated crimes and incidents do not take place in a vacuum. They are part of a vicious cycle whereby prejudice and stereotypes are instilled in the home and at school and are reinforced in public discourse by some politicians and influential community leaders. While a causal relationship between a speech and a crime is rarely proven, intolerant discourse can create an atmosphere conducive to violent actions against identifiable groups. Perpetrators may interpret that their actions are condoned if words of hate, prejudice, stereotypes are spoken openly and not condemned. Victims may be hesitant to come forward if such speech is rampant and never challenged.

We all recognize that intolerant speech should be avoided since it has the potential to increase tension amongst and between communities. Words can do harm. The major challenge for us in responding to such speech is to find a fair balance between fundamental rights, in particular freedom of expression, the right to dignity, and protection from discrimination. Is freedom of expression absolute? If not, when is it legitimate and necessary to restrict it, on the grounds that some perceive that their rights and their dignity are being violated?

International standards do not provide a simple answer. They guarantee freedom of expression and allow restrictions only where they are provided by law and necessary in a democratic society. At the same time, they prescribe that speech that incites “discrimination, hostility or violence” on religious, national or racial grounds should be criminalized (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 20). However, although this rightly implies a high threshold for the restriction of freedom of speech, there is no consensus on what is meant by incitement or advocacy of hatred under the law.

Our experience indicates that criminalization of hate speech poses serious risks to freedom of expression, as it can be easily used against vulnerable communities, instead of protecting them, and can impede the robust debate which is necessary in a democratic society. This approach is also reflected in the OSCE *acquis*: participating States have reaffirmed the commitment to protect and to promote freedom of expression and the right to equality, by stressing the positive role the media and political representatives can play in combating stereotypes. They also have stressed the importance of education in shaping the attitudes and behavior of young people.

This is why ODIHR has developed “Guidelines for Educators to Counter Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims” in partnership with the Council of Europe and UNESCO. The first of its’ kind, this document addresses the specific characteristics of intolerance against Muslims and provides practical guidance to educators on how to address this issue with a view to creating a climate where diversity is not only tolerated but also valued. The guidebook is the result of a broad consultation process; experts from across the region including from academia, civil society, international organizations and government ministries have contributed their insights and recommendations throughout the preparation of this document.

In terms of practical recommendations, the guidelines also offer key suggestions to educators on how to respond to challenging scenarios in the classroom setting. The document proposes strategies to educators on how to respond when a student and/or a teacher are witnesses to or victims of intolerance and discrimination. It also provides educators with a number of practical approaches to ensuring that both students and teachers are free from intolerance and discrimination. Some of these strategies include: development of codes of conduct, establishment of student organizations and/or implementation of mentorship programs as well as curriculum opt-out policies. Finally, the guidelines provide insight into methodological approaches that can be undertaken to increase critical thinking and media literacy skills as a means of countering intolerance in the classroom.

I am convinced that these Guidelines can be a valuable resource for policy makers and for educators. They can be complemented by country-specific teaching materials. Our experience in the area of anti-Semitism shows that this is a successful strategy to address the phenomenon of intolerance. As of today, ODIHR’s teaching materials on anti-Semitism are used in 14 participating States. I would encourage you to make use of the “Guidelines for Educators to Counter Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims” and request the support of our Office and its partner organizations in the development of teaching materials.

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Today’s event presents an opportunity for all of us to highlight the challenges we face and openly discuss how we can work together in a comprehensive and concerted manner. We look forward to hearing your views and recommendations and to a lively discussion.

CONFRONTING INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MUSLIMS IN PUBLIC DISCOURSE

(OSCE/ODIHR Meeting, Vienna, 28 October 2011)

*Ambassador Ömür Orhun**

Backdrop

The former UN Secretary General summed up his concerns about discrimination against Muslims a few years ago as follows: “Today, the weight of history and the fallout of recent developments have left many Muslims around the world aggrieved and misunderstood, concerned about the erosion of their rights and even fearing of their physical safety” He added: “Stereotypes also depict Muslims as opposed to the West, despite a history not only of conflict but also of cooperation and of influencing and enriching each other’s art and science. European civilization would not have advanced to the extent it did had Christian scholars not benefited from the learning and literature of Islam in the Middle Ages and later.”

I believe we are still there. Nothing much has changed, if not worsened.

In fact, the present UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said very recently the following: “We must acknowledge that intolerance has increased in many parts of the world over the past decade. (We must) aim to further the fight against racism and we should condemn anyone who subverts this effort with inflammatory rhetoric, baseless assertions and hateful speech.” As for political discourse, he added: “We must resist polarizing politicians who play on people’s fears and use stereotypes to gain electoral advantage.”

On the other hand, Prof. Ihsanoglu, the Secretary General of the OIC stated at the AoC Rio Forum last year the following: “Looking at the issue dispassionately and objectively, we see that a new form of xenophobia and racism is being pursued by right wing extremist elements in the West. These elements may not be large in number, but they have proved themselves effective in corrupting the minds of the ordinary people of Europe to take a negative and distorted view of Islam and Muslims. This trend is gaining strength and unless we can take a collective stand against it now, its dangerous implications would be far beyond of what we can imagine. The attack on Islam by radical groups and insecurity and insults felt by Muslims living in Western societies violates their fundamental human rights, thus threatening the multicultural fabric of these societies. The stereotyping of Muslims leads to discrimination and violence, defying justification on both political as well as economic grounds. It poses grave and multidimensional challenges to global as well as regional peace, security and stability. The situation merits a concerted effort on the part of the international community to

evolve norms that would underwrite, promote and protect inter-faith and inter-communal understanding and harmony.”

These are very clear statements coming from the leaders of the two largest international organizations, demonstrating the extent of the problem. Therefore, instead of enumerating more instances of hateful speech in the political discourse and by the media, I would like to concentrate on what to do to confront these instances.

However, I would like to begin by underlining very briefly two points in the field of public discourse related to Muslims and Islam.

a) Political rhetoric: Responsible politicians, both of the government and of the opposition, must underline the importance of correct and unbiased discourse and should also refrain from hate speech and other manifestations of extremism and discrimination. A message of encouraging tolerance, non-discrimination, understanding and respect for all must be voiced.

b) The media: The media can play a very positive role in promoting inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue and harmony. This is what is expected from responsible journalism.

On the other hand, the media may also play a very negative and divisive role in projecting wrong and inaccurate messages. Therefore, with due respect to the freedom of expression, governments can assist or encourage creation of self-regulatory media bodies to deal with manifestations of discrimination and racism.

Expressions of anti-Muslim public discourse remain a serious issue of grave concern not only in the OSCE area, but also beyond. Manifestations of Islamophobia exacerbate hostile attitudes towards Muslims and Muslim communities especially in Western Europe and Northern America, and have the potential to fuel anti-Muslim incidents and violence.

Regretfully, expressions of anti-Muslim discourse in public sphere have not gathered the attention they deserve. Consequently, not much has been done in the recuperative area.

I am sure this meeting will be helpful in raising awareness of the gravity of anti-Muslim expressions in public discourse; in increasing understanding of this phenomenon; and of its impact on security and stability. I do hope you will also be able to explore the role that media may play in promoting tolerance and preventing hate crimes. I also hope that best practices, if any, will be shared and practical recommendations will be made.

A New Relationship

I would like to underline again and again that what is needed is a positive consciousness on the necessity of a new relationship among all our citizens to attain solidarity through respect for cultural diversity. I believe that responsible members of all communities must have the wisdom and also the courage to work and to live together. Thereby any clash or any perception of clash among civilizations, cultures or religions can be eliminated.

We must also learn to enjoy our differences, while respecting the others. Differences should not lead to discrimination.

Nations and societies, like individuals, act in their perceived best interest; however, they should understand that bridging the gaps between divergent best interests is the key to common recuperative capacity.

On the other hand, it is a well-established fact that principles of tolerance and non-discrimination lie at the center of the human rights system. These principles are also closely linked to the concept of mutual respect. Mutual respect, on the other hand, is based on equality in dignity, as well as equality in benefiting from human rights.

Disregard for tolerance and non-discrimination principles leads to the dismantling of peaceful, secure and stable societies and harms inter-state relations. Democracy and protection of fundamental freedoms and human rights, on the other hand, are essential safeguards of tolerance and non-discrimination.

However, more and more people seem to have started to believe that a clash of civilizations is inevitable and that “the others” have to change their values if we are to live together in peace. This attitude threatens the international environment and creates a vicious circle. The widening gap between the parties puts them on a path of confrontation rather than one of cooperation, while lack of dialogue and collaboration bolsters existing prejudices and thus increases the distance between them.

In such a situation, mankind must join forces to resist all attempts to play one culture off against the other, to assert the supremacy of any single culture or religion, or to propagate a “clash of civilizations”. Such ideologies would soon lead to a conflict in which everybody can only lose. And they prevent us from finding joint solutions to the problems facing us all.

Therefore, all the countries of the East and of the West must share a vision of free, tolerant and just societies, where people of different cultural and religious backgrounds live in peace and respect each other.

Islamophobia

Now I would like to say a few words on Islamophobia. I know that the OSCE prefers to use the term “intolerance and discrimination against Muslims”, but the fact remains that the phenomenon we face is multifaceted and needs first of all a comprehensive definition. Therefore, I will attempt to share with you a text for that purpose, which reads as follows:

“Islamophobia is a contemporary form of racism and xenophobia motivated by unfounded fear, mistrust and hatred of Muslims and Islam. Islamophobia is also manifested through intolerance, discrimination, unequal treatment, prejudice, stereotyping, hostility and adverse public discourse. Differentiating from classical racism and xenophobia, Islamophobia is mainly based on stigmatization of a religion and its followers. As such, Islamophobia is an affront to the human rights and dignity of Muslims.”

Some international organizations and civil society representatives have utilized different parts of this definition. I believe that a well-rounded definition that puts the phenomenon before us in a human rights context will be of great value. I am sure you will consider my suggestion positively.

Conclusion

In line with the well thought concept note of this meeting, I believe our objectives in respect of countering negative and harmful public discourse against Muslims should be threefold:

First of all, we must address manifestations of Islamophobia, including intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in public discourse in the media and political speech.

Secondly, we must analyze current occurrences of prejudices, stereotypes and hate against Muslims in such discourse.

Finally, we must share good practices and gather a set of recommendations on how to prevent and how to respond to manifestations of intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in public discourse.

All concerned also need to focus on concrete measures that can be highlighted in order to assist authorities in shaping a constructive and respectful discourse in society.

In conclusion, let me state that I share ODIHR's recommendation that we should pay specific attention to the following aspects of the issue:

- addressing anti-Muslim prejudices and stereotypes that are prevalent in public discourse across the entire West,
- exploring effective ways to combat intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in public discourse,
- focusing on the role of education to confront Islamophobia, and intolerance and discrimination against Muslims.

To try to sum up what I attempted to convey, let me end by saying that the measures we will take in countering anti-Muslim public discourse must be: appropriate, effective, inclusive, sustainable and adaptable.

** Ambassador Ömür Orhun, former Turkish Permanent Representative to the OSCE and former Personal Representative of the OSCE on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims (2004-2008), is presently Member of the Governing Board of EMISCO (European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion). He is also Member of the Human Rights Committee of the Turkish UNESCO National Commission, Chairperson of the OSCE Panel of Adjudication and Adviser to the OIC on human rights and anti-discrimination issues.*

Remarks from Hon. Matteo Mecacci at the high-level conference on “Confronting Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in Public Discourse”

Vienna, 28 October 2011

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

This is a very timely conference to discuss how, in the OSCE region, the public discourse relates to Islam in general, and with Islamic communities and individuals in particular. I have just gotten back, together with Ambassador Andreas Nothelle and Roberto Montella, from Tunisia where - together with dozens of Parliamentarians from the OSCE PA, the Council of Europe, and the European Parliament - we observed the first elections held in North Africa and in the Middle East since the beginning of the so-called Arab Spring and the subsequent demise of some of the authoritarian government of that region.

All observers agree that despite the many challenges, the vote and the electoral campaigning was conducted in a competitive and transparent way. As we all know, democracy and the rule of law cannot be established simply with the holding of one fair election, but the beginning of democracy which we have witnessed in an Arab and Muslim state must certainly be encouraged.

The reason I am mentioning this in the context of this conference is not only related to the political relevance of what happened last Sunday for Tunisia, for the entire region, the OSCE, and for Europe, but also in order to reflect on our perceptions and our descriptions of the Arab and Muslim world. In fact, for decades, a significant part of the leadership of European and Western states have considered the predominantly Muslim societies of North Africa and the Middle East as simply unfit for democracy.

We have seen how leading intellectuals and politicians in the Western world have developed theories of so-called “cultural relativism,” according to which Muslims and Arabs were simply not capable, for cultural and historical reasons (and for some of them even for racial reasons) of living in a democracy, and it was therefore necessary for us to support dictatorships. Or at the utmost when these governments finally became dangerous, the only way to deal with them should be to overthrow them with military interventions.

Now, putting aside for a moment any consideration on the wisdom of such policies - which I believe speak for themselves - it is necessary to state that the misguided perception about Muslims by an increasing part of our societies also depends on these theories, which have been backed - sometimes indirectly, sometimes directly - by our States and is not only a product of the rise of populist and extremist parties.

This, I believe, is important to note, and for example, the rise of the opposition to the entry of Turkey in the European Union has coincided with the increased support shown by the Turkish people to the Justice and Development Party led by Prime Minister Recip Erdogan.

Since then we have seen the rise in the European public debate, not exactly of Islamophobia, but of the need, for example, to define Europe as a geographical concept with physical boundaries, based on cultural affinity, on the need to reaffirm the Christian and Jewish roots of our continent, and more generally on the incompatibility of Muslim values with Christian values. Apart from historical considerations on the role of the Mediterranean in the history of the European region, I might as well remind the proponents of such theories that Jesus Christ was born in Palestine.

We can see that in our societies there is an increasing need to build new cultural and physical walls when faced with new challenges. Economic challenges, migration challenges, fuel the legitimate concerns of our people if they are addressed only by populist policies. And it is not a secret that this reaction is also partly due to terrorist organizations, who take inspiration from Muslim extremists who have been able to threaten seriously the security of our societies.

It is also important to note that Muslim societies have an historical challenge to confront; and this is the relationship with a modern and secular society where individual, and not community rights are at the center of the relationship between the citizens, the State, and regional organizations. But we cannot expect this to happen overnight after decades of dictatorship.

I believe that the best way to tackle the rise of populism and extremism in public discourse in our societies, which is targeting minority groups, and in particular Muslims, is to engage directly at the institutional and political level with the societies of the Mediterranean region to affirm in a joint effort the universality of individual rights, which those people are now clearly demanding.

If Europe and the OSCE will not be there for them, someone else will. And in order to do that that it is necessary for the leadership of these regions, including the European Union, to try to solve the economic and social crisis that we are facing, not recurring to nationalist policies and the stigmatization of minorities, which would bring us back to the period before the First World War (and, in this regard, the rhetoric used these days by EU leaders is very worrying). Instead, we should embrace a future of institutional transnational cooperation with Muslim countries based on the universal values of democracy and freedom.

I thank you for your attention and look forward to continuing the discussion with you about these issues in the future.

ANNEX III: Closing Remarks

**Closing remarks by the Permanent Representative of
Lithuania to the OSCE, H.E. Ambassador Renatas Norkus
Conference on Confronting Intolerance and Discrimination
against Muslims in Public Discourse
Vienna, 28 October 2011**

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we have witnessed a very lively and constructive discussion. We have had three very solid working sessions with in-depth discussions and we have heard a number of concrete ideas and recommendations.

The fact that the Conference has attracted such a large number of participants and experts from the OSCE area is an indication of the very great importance attached to this topic in our Organization. It is clear from the interventions that the issue of intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in public discourse is a topic of serious concern in the OSCE region and that action is required to address it. Manifestations of intolerance regarding Muslims in public discourse may legitimize discriminatory practices and fuel acts of violence against individuals, creating insecurity, exclusion and alienation among Muslim communities. What is more, as the anti-Muslim prejudices are taking on new forms, they may give rise to conflict and violence on a wider scale that could undermine stability and security in the region.

In spite of some tangible achievements in fostering tolerance and mutual understanding, the scope of this problem is still not adequately acknowledged. I am convinced that this meeting has provided an excellent and timely forum for the participating States and other intergovernmental agencies, experts, and representatives of the media and civil society to debate the most pressing issues concerning intolerant and discriminatory public discourse against Muslims.

The comprehensive report of this Conference, containing both a record of the discussions and the recommendations, will be compiled and published, as usual, on the OSCE website.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Even though the responsibility for fighting intolerance and discrimination against any members or groups in our societies lies with the OSCE participating States, the role of all the main stakeholders, including State actors, civil society, the media and religious leaders, is of particular importance in the fight against intolerance and discrimination.

The Lithuanian Chairmanship wholeheartedly welcomes the special expertise that the ODIHR has developed in the area of combating manifestations of intolerance and discrimination, which puts it in a unique position to assist participating States in responding to those specific challenges. We therefore encourage all the OSCE participating States to fully co-operate with the ODIHR, as well as with each other, sharing experiences and best practices in this field. Let me reiterate that combating intolerance and discrimination, especially through educational and awareness-raising measures, as well as promoting freedom of expression and the media, are among the top priorities of the Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship for this year.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite the distinguished audience of today's meeting to attend the final event of the Lithuanian Chairmanship's human dimension agenda – the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Prevention of Racism, Xenophobia and Hate Crimes through Educational and Awareness-Raising Initiatives, which will take place in Vienna on 10 and 11 November.

In the few weeks remaining until the Ministerial Council meeting in Vilnius, it is the intention of the Lithuanian Chairmanship to engage in building consensus on updating the OSCE political commitments in the field of tolerance and non-discrimination, notably by guiding through the adoption process a draft Ministerial Council decision on countering manifestations of intolerance in public discourse.

In our view, this decision could be based on the recommendations of the three high-level meetings on this topic that we have conducted in Prague, Rome and today in Vienna. The draft Ministerial Council decision could, for example:

1. Call on the participating States to adopt comprehensive policies with a view to countering prejudice and to promoting fundamental rights, mutual respect and understanding;
2. Stress the importance of including teaching about human rights values and principles in school curricula, promoting Holocaust remembrance, developing media literacy, raising awareness about stereotypes and bias in public discourse, and encouraging intercultural dialogue, as well as dialogue between religions or belief groups within societies;
3. Call on public officials to publicly condemn manifestations of hate in public discourse and acts of violence based on bias and to refrain from making discriminatory statements;

4. Urge community and religious leaders to speak out against manifestations of hate, and to act in a spirit of solidarity to ensure freedom of religion or belief;
5. Support the efforts of non-governmental organizations to monitor, analyse and report on the use of discriminatory speech or stereotypes in public discourse.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship and the Chairperson- in- Office, Minister Audronius Ažubalis, personally, let me extend expressions of sincere appreciation to the experts of the ODIHR for organizing this event.

I would like to thank the speakers and participants for your active contributions to the discussions during today's meeting. Last but not least, let me also thank the interpreters for their excellent work today.

ANNEX IV: Biographies of the Panelists and Moderators
Confronting Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in Public Discourse

Vienna, 28 October 2011

Panelists and Moderators: Professional Biographies

Session I: Manifestations of Anti-Muslim Prejudice and Stereotypes in Public Discourse

Moderator:

Ms. Floriane Hohenberg, Head, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Department, OSCE ODIHR

Floriane Hohenberg has been working for ODIHR since 2005 and has been the Head of the Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Department since 2009. From 2000 until 2004 she was the Head of the Representation in Germany of the French Commission for the Victims of Spoliation Resulting from the Anti-Semitic Legislation in Force during the Occupation. Between 1998 and 1999 she participated in a study commissioned by the French government on the extent of the confiscation of Jewish assets in France during World War II.

Panelists:

Mr. Aslambek Aslakhonov, Deputy Chairman of the Federal Council's Committee for Foreign Affairs (Russian Federation)

Mr. Aslakhonov is Deputy Chairman of the Federal Council's Committee for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. In 2004, he was appointed as an Adviser to the President. From 2000 to 2003, he served as Deputy of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation and as a Member of the State Duma Committee on issues of nationalities.

Ms. Emine Bozkurt, Member of European Parliament, Socialist Group (Netherlands)

Ms. Bozkurt has been a member of the European Parliament for the Netherlands since 2004. Ms. Bozkurt obtained an M.A. degree in European Studies at the University of Amsterdam in 1992. After her studies, she worked in various organizations including the Dutch Muslim

Broadcasting Company (NMO), the Rathenau Institute for Science and Technology, and the consultancy firm Radar. Currently, Ms. Bozkurt sits on the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee and the Committee on Foreign Affairs. She is spokesperson on the situation of women's rights in Turkey for the European Parliament and is the spokesperson on Bosnia and Herzegovina for the Alliance of Socialists and Democrats. Ms. Bozkurt is the Chair of the Delegation responsible for relations with the countries of Central America. Central to her work is her fight for equal rights and her strong stance against discrimination. She has been appointed Chairwoman of the Cross Party Anti-racism and Diversity Intergroup of the European Parliament.

Ms. Liz Fekete, Executive Director, Institute for Race Relations (United Kingdom)

Ms. Fekete is the Executive Director of the Institute of Race Relations (IRR), an educational charity that seeks to combat racism and heads the IRR's European Research Programme. Her research, amongst other areas, focuses on racism with respect to asylum-seekers and the 'war on terror'. She is the author of *A Suitable Enemy: Racism, Migration and Islamophobia in Europe* and has published widely on racism, xenophobia and asylum issues.

Dr. Gudrun Harrer, Senior Editor, Der Standard (Austria)

Dr. Harrer is the Senior Editor of the daily newspaper Der Standard in Vienna. She holds an M.A. in Islamic and Arabic Studies and a PhD in International Studies. She teaches Middle Eastern History and Politics at Vienna University and at the Diplomatic Academy Vienna. In 2006, she was the Special Envoy of the Austrian Presidency of the European Union to Iraq.

Session II: The Impact of Anti-Muslim Discourse

Moderator:

Dr. Agnès Callamard, Executive Director, Article 19 (United Kingdom)

Dr. Callamard is the current executive director of ARTICLE 19, the international human rights organisation promoting and defending freedom of expression and access to information globally. Dr. Callamard has a distinguished and extensive career in human rights and humanitarian work. She founded and led HAP International (the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership) where she oversaw field trials in Afghanistan, Cambodia and Sierra Leone and created the first international self-regulatory body for humanitarian agencies committed to strengthening accountability for disaster-affected populations. She is a former Chef de Cabinet for the Secretary General of Amnesty International, and as the

organisation's Research Policy Coordinator, she led Amnesty's work on women's human rights. Ms. Callamard has conducted human rights investigations in a large number of countries in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East and has worked extensively in the field of international refugee movements with the Center for Refugee Studies in Toronto. She has published broadly in the field of human rights, women's rights, refugee movements and accountability and holds a PhD in Political Science from the New School for Social Research in New York.

Panelists:

Professor Egdūnas Račius, Head of Department of Regional Studies, Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy, Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania)

Professor Račius is the Head of the Department of Regional Studies, Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy, Vytautas Magnus University. He is also the Director of the Multi Cultural Centre, a non-governmental organization which aims to raise awareness of world cultural heritage in Lithuania and to promote multicultural understanding and tolerance among peoples of different cultural backgrounds. As a scholar, his areas of interests focus on the situation of Muslim communities in the Nordic and Baltic countries, the history of Islam and Muslims in Europe and inter-faith relations.

Dr. Sabine Schiffer, Head of Media Responsibility Institute (IMV) (Germany)

Dr. Schiffer is head of the Media Responsibility Institute (IMV) in Germany where she organizes and conducts workshops on media analysis and media education. She holds a Ph.D. in linguistics from the University of Erlangen. Her research focuses on the analysis of prejudice and discrimination in news media and on the impact of the media on attitudes and values. Modern forms of propaganda – including the role of think-tanks and PR-agencies – are one of her most well-known subjects, in which the "Enemy" (Feindbild) Islam is playing an important role today. Her publications include *Coverage of Islam in German Press* (2005), a contribution in *Racism as a Barrier of Social Integration* (2007) and to the *Cartoon Debate* (2007) in addition to journal articles about Anti-Judaism, Middle East News Coverage and the increase in 'media violence'. Her most recent book, published together with Constantin Wagner, provides a comparative analysis of the anti-Jewish discourse in Europe during the 19th Century and contemporary anti-Islamic discourse. She was member of the Islamic Council of the German government for three years and a member of their working group on media and integration issues.

Mr. Sergiu Sochirca, Chairperson of the Islamic League of Moldova (Moldova)

Mr. Sochirca is the Chairperson of the Islamic League of Moldova, the first Muslim organization registered in the country, which represents Islam as an official religion. The Republic of Moldova was the last European country to officially recognize Islam. In spite of these efforts stemming from as early as 2002, the Islamic League of Moldova was only officially registered in 2011. Their official registration prompted an intense media and political campaign against their registration resulting in several protests against Islamic League in particular, but also against Islam and Muslims in general. According to official statistics, the Muslim minority in Moldova totals approximately 2,000. However, unofficially there are as many as 17,000 Muslims who live in Moldova.

Session III: Effective Responses and Good Practices

Moderator:

Ms. Milica Pesic, Executive Director, Media Diversity Institute (United Kingdom)

Ms. Pesic is the executive director of the Media Diversity Institute (MDI), a non-for-profit London-based international organisation which specializes in promoting diversity through media and media education. Through her work with MDI, Ms. Pesic has designed and supervised multi-national, multi-annual diversity media development programmes in Europe, South Asia, Sub-Sahara, West Africa and Cuba. Prior to work with MDI, Ms. Pesic worked for the Center for War, Peace and the News Media (New York University), the International Federation of Journalists (Brussels), and the Alternative Information Network (Paris). She is a Media and Diversity Expert for the Council of Europe and has provided media training for the UN, Council of Europe, UNICEF, OSI, EBDR, Internews, Freedom Forum and the IFJ.

Panelists:

Lord Nazir Ahmed, Vice Chair, All Party Parliamentary Inter-Faith Group (United Kingdom)

Lord Ahmed is Vice Chair of All Party Parliamentary Inter-Faith Group, which aims increase awareness amongst parliamentarians of the religious dimensions related to current issues in the United Kingdom. As a resident of Rotherham, Lord Ahmed has spoken on behalf of communities in the region, in particular the families of the former steelworkers of the 1960s who migrated from the Indian subcontinent and are now living in the United Kingdom as second or third generation British. Lord Ahmed has spoken out about his concerns regarding the possibilities of living in peaceful co-existence amidst the growing move towards the far

right across Europe. His work strives to encourage positive integration into society so that people of all cultures can live together harmoniously.

Mr. Yusuf Fernandez, President, European Islamic Media Network (Spain)

Mr. Fernandez is secretary of the Muslim Federation of Spain, the editor of the multilanguage site islamico.org, and the founder of the European Islamic Media Network which offers online information about Islam and the activities and views of Muslims in the region. It aims at giving a voice to the Muslim community in Europe, to advocate for the protection of their civil rights, and to promote understanding and tolerance within European society. In November 2008, a group of twenty young European Muslim media organisations of various shapes and sizes managed to gather in Madrid, Spain to launch a new initiative aimed at combining their resources to better address these issues. They concluded that a well organised, independent Muslim media network, connected to Muslim communities on the ground, has the potential contribute a lot to counter anti-Muslim prejudices and stereotypes.

Mr. Daanish Masood, Media and Partnerships Manager for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

Mr. Masood is the media and partnerships manager for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. At the interface of governments and civil society, the Alliance of Civilizations works to improve collaborative relations among different countries, communities, and cultures. Its aim is to enhance mutual understanding between different societies, with a focus on Muslim-majority countries, the United States, and Europe. Their media program is comprised of a series of ongoing projects, including an online resource that connects journalists to commentary by experts on conflicts, and online and in-person workshops for journalists in collaboration with the New York Times and the International Center for Journalists. Mr. Masood plays a central role in the strategic development of a number of the Alliance's projects, including its flagship media program, which he leads. Beyond the media program, Mr. Masood also provides guidance to the organization regarding broader strategy issues, including future projects, fundraising, and new partnerships. He also plays a key role in serving the organization's communications-related needs, including drafting speeches and advisories for the office of the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and the leadership of the UN Alliance.