



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Follow-up to Tolerance Conferences

As delivered by Mr. Mark Levin, Delegation Member,
to the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, Warsaw
October 12, 2004

Mr. Chairman, the United States is pleased with the work of the OSCE over the past year in promoting tolerance and non-discrimination. The intense efforts to address the ills of anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia and discrimination in the OSCE region, have done much to move participating States to action. At the end of the day, it is concrete deeds, and not mere words, that matter, and we believe the foundation is set for real progress.

The Berlin Declaration has become an important international document, both inside and outside the OSCE, and other organizations, including the United Nations, are urged to adopt it as a model. The United States recalls that all 55 participating States together made a historic statement by unambiguously condemning anti-Semitism, noting that no "international developments or political issues" could ever justify these hateful acts. At the conclusion of the Berlin Conference came the welcome offer by the Spanish to hold a follow-up event in Cordoba next year. The United States welcomes the Spanish offer to host an event and pledges to work with the Spanish to make it a reality.

Emerging from Berlin and Brussels was the clear and widespread feeling that our fight against the perennial evils of anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia and discrimination would be strengthened by the creation of two personal envoys of the Chair-in-Office with specific mandates to increase political will to combat anti-Semitism and intolerance throughout the OSCE region. Appointing individuals of high political standing would complement, not compete with, the work of ODIHR and help move participating States to apply the mechanisms to track, report and combat these crimes. The United States believes that the best way to approach this issue is to create one special envoy on anti-Semitism and a second, separate envoy on racism, xenophobia and discrimination. This appointment must not wait until the Sofia Ministerial. The fact that twenty states have yet to submit data on hate crimes to ODIHR indicates a pressing need for representatives of high political stature to begin traveling immediately to raise political will on behalf of the OSCE to tackle these and other important issues.

The United States was also pleased with the Brussels OSCE Conference on Tolerance and the Fight against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination. Many pressing social issues received intense consideration. The Brussels Conference provided a forum where concerns about legal and social discrimination against Muslims, persons of color and religious minorities could be addressed and possible solutions discussed. The Brussels Declaration, building on the Berlin Declaration, noted that "international developments or political issues never justify racism, xenophobia or discrimination." The Declaration also encouraged the establishment of "training programs for law enforcement and judicial officials on legislation and enforcement

of legislation relating to hate crimes." The United States hopes OSCE institutions and participating States will promote such programs at an early date.

Within the OSCE region, a separate focus on combating anti-Semitism is long overdue, and the two-track approach for addressing this issue and issues of racism, xenophobia and discrimination is already proving effective. For example, in Berlin and Brussels, OSCE States affirmed their commitment to "collect and maintain reliable information and statistics about anti-Semitic crimes, and other hate crimes, committed within their territory," and to also report this information to ODIHR. This commitment is reshaping how ODIHR and the OSCE address anti-Semitic crimes and hate crimes and is moving the Organization into an area where its work is most definitely needed. The ODIHR is well positioned to accomplish this task and we appreciated the comprehensive overview provided in Brussels of future ODIHR activities in this area. These efforts will require the sustained support of the participating States and sufficient funding. Recognizing the significant expansion of ODIHR's mandate since Maastricht, we encourage all participating States to forward statistics and other relevant information as agreed and appreciate the periodic updates provided by ODIHR on each participating States' status in submitting data. We urge that these submissions be made available to the public. The United States encourages all participating States to fulfill their commitment to submit information on hate crimes and legal statutes, so a complete picture can be drawn in time for the Sofia Ministerial and so that the OSCE can begin planning appropriate programs.

Over the past two years, the OSCE has done much to develop tools in the fight against anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance, recognizing that it is ultimately up to the participating States themselves to act. The Porto and Maastricht Ministerial decisions were groundbreaking, and we look to the Sofia Ministerial to endorse the Berlin Declaration and the Brussels Declaration and to welcome the Spanish offer to host a follow-up event. Nearly thirty years after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, it is unconscionable that large numbers of people in the OSCE region are still exposed -- sometimes on a daily basis -- to anti-Semitic, racist, xenophobic or discriminatory acts.