

DELEGATION OF TURKEY

2 October 2006

**HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
(Warsaw, 2-13 October 2006)**

Working Session 1: Fundamental Freedoms (Freedom of Expression)

STATEMENT

**FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND
HATE SPEECH**

Mr. Moderator,

We have joined the EU statement which emphasized the freedom of expression and free media as a cornerstone of our common system of values. So I don't need to repeat the mantra. Instead, let me share a few thoughts on racist discourse and hate speech, in particular the one that targets the Muslims, their religion and their prophet.

Not to make the case, because I believe it has already been made, but perhaps to reinforce it, I can cite many recent examples of such discourse.

It is not difficult to see where this discourse is leading to... Evidently we cannot sit back and bear the consequences, but must be compelled to speak loudly and clearly: Hate speech undermines free expression. It does not occur in a vacuum. Hate speech is either directly targeted at vulnerable minority groups or contributes to a context in which their rights are undermined. In democracies we have a moral and legal obligation to protect the dignity of targeted individuals, their right to equality, their right to be free from discrimination, and ultimately their right to life, as hate speeches have too often been associated with ethnic cleansing, wars and genocide. The international law does impose a positive duty upon states to ensure these rights in the context of restricting freedom of expression.

Let us begin by dispelling this seeming dichotomy which results in inertia and lethargy. There is no contradiction in simultaneously protecting people against hate speech and making sure that freedom of expression is and remains one of the key pillars upon which our societies are founded.

Mr. Moderator,

Much has been said about the media responsibility. Indeed, if I may use a quote from the Secretary General of the International Federation of Journalists, "the freedom of expression is not just about the right to publish, it is equally about the right not to publish." Now some may call this "self-censorship", others

"responsibility". We have to deal with such differences of perception first. And the OSCE should fit well for a discussion on these issues as a unique platform for dialogue which brings together various schools of thought on freedom of expression.

If and when we embark on this exercise, no doubt we would study the case presented by the political discourse employed by some parties in the latest Austrian election campaign and how its blatantly racist and prejudicial content, which was mutely and I may say conveniently ignored by mainstream political party representatives, went unsanctioned to shape the electoral choices and perhaps even the final outcome.

Thank you.