

The Ongoing Struggle Against Anti-Semitism

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Mr. Moderator, distinguished delegates,

In the past three years, the OSCE has held three milestone conferences on anti-Semitism – in Vienna, Berlin, and Cordoba, respectively. The important progress that these conferences have represented should be acknowledged and appreciated. But while these now regularly-scheduled meetings have come to represent a real source of hope, recent events have unfortunately reminded us that much work remains to be done. Since the recent round of conflict between Israel and Hezbollah broke out in July, a discernible increase in anti-Semitism has resulted. Great Britain, which this year celebrated the 350th anniversary of its Jewish community, has witnessed a surge in violent attacks on Jewish institutions and individuals, but elsewhere in Europe and the United States, as well, anti-Semitic incidents have risen in number.

Which brings me to what must be our objective: Rededicating ourselves to doing something, practically and effectively, to combat, contain, and wherever possible, eradicate anti-Semitism. It is simply unacceptable that hatred of Jews continues to threaten citizens and communities in many of the OSCE's 56 member countries and beyond the OSCE region, and that that threat is in fact escalating in some areas. To lessen or lose the focus that the OSCE has applied to opposing anti-Semitism in the past three years – precisely when events have led to an intensification of the problem in recent

months – would be a tragic mistake. Rather, this is a time to increase the spotlight on anti-Semitism as a distinct and uniquely resilient social illness, and to redouble our efforts to combat it.

To this end, we must continue to make discussions of anti-Semitism more than just an infrequent event – and, for that matter, more than mere discussions. The OSCE should convene another Cordoba-style, high-level conference on anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance in 2007, such as the government of Romania has offered to host.

Furthermore, the Ministerial Council should formalize the scheduling of such gatherings at regular intervals.

Moreover, we must broadly advance the spirit of zero-tolerance for anti-Semitism cultivated at these OSCE gatherings, by steadfastly implementing relevant programs of action – in education, legislation, and law enforcement.

We must bolster the funding of ODIHR and the staffing of its anti-Semitism-related programs, so that it can further expand its critical work and, in that vein, OSCE member states must fulfill their reporting requirements with regard to combating anti-Semitism.

We must extend, for the foreseeable future, the terms of the OSCE Chair-in-Office's personal representatives on intolerance, who direct sustained attention, at the highest level, to the problems of anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance. We must also support conditions that would facilitate rather than hinder the work of the personal

representatives and enable them to perform their functions to the best of their respective abilities.

We should further promote the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia's working definition of anti-Semitism and must maintain our commitment to the specialized treatment of the roots and manifestations of anti-Semitism, even as we fittingly deplore and take firm steps to address intolerance in its many forms.

Finally, we must strongly reiterate and proactively reinforce the crucial principle declared at the 2004 Berlin conference and reiterated at last year's Cordoba conference: that no political position, cause or grievance can ever justify anti-Semitism. We must further make clear, once and for all, that the de-legitimization and demonization of Israel that goes far beyond responsible criticism of government policies is often none other than anti-Semitism in a different guise. Denial of the Jewish right to self-determination – to peace and security for Jews in their homeland – is, very simply, anti-Semitism. To employ terrorism and to intimidate and incite against Jews – in schoolbooks, sermons, and the media – is most certainly anti-Semitism. In Europe or anywhere, let us not apologize for hatred, and let us not turn a blind eye to criminality.

In closing, Mr. Moderator,

It is fitting, and encouraging, that in light of the history of this continent, Europe and its friends are uniting to tackle anti-Semitism. Intolerance is by no means limited to the

jurisdiction of the OSCE's 56 member states, but it is noble, and necessary, that we here today lead by standing decisively and unmistakably against anti-Semitism, in both word and deed. By so doing, we will create a more secure Europe, and a better world.

Thank you for your commitment and your leadership.