

Joint Statement on Zero Discrimination Day

As prepared for delivery at the 1091st meeting of
the OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna
March 3, 2016

Delivered on behalf of the following 47 participating States:

Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, the European Union and its member states: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Norway, San Marino, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and the United States of America

On March 1, the world commemorated for the 3rd time Zero Discrimination Day, a day to celebrate diversity and recognize that every person counts.

The OSCE decided in Madrid in 2007 to take a comprehensive approach “to effectively combat all forms of discrimination.” We jointly celebrate Zero Discrimination Day because we believe that promoting tolerance and respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms for all is central to the OSCE’s vision of comprehensive security with the inherent dignity of the individual at its core. This principle is firmly enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which proclaims that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

Political leaders must fight discrimination, and must ensure that they do not reinforce it by taking discriminatory action against members of any vulnerable group, or by introducing legislation that creates undue restrictions on the rights of members of such groups to exercise the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, association, and freedom of religion or belief.

We reiterate our support for the work of the OSCE, notably that of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, and other Executive Structures, as well as OSCE Chairmanships and their Personal Representatives, to promote tolerance and non-discrimination toward all, foster the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by every person, and oppose hate crimes of any sort, directed against anyone.

In conclusion, we call upon all participating States of the OSCE to live up to their commitment to combat all forms of discrimination. Fundamentally, tolerance is built upon the recognition and full respect of the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of all, without distinction. Let’s work together to translate our commitment into practice and to spread the values of tolerance, openness and justice.

Thank you.