



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Upcoming Cordoba Conference on Anti-Semitism and on Other Forms of Intolerance

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As we head towards next week's Cordoba Conference on Anti-Semitism and on Other Forms of Intolerance, I would like to take a moment to reiterate something that I said at the PrepCom this Tuesday and that I have said many times before: The OSCE is a beacon and should continue to intensify the strength of that beacon – that is, a beacon of tolerance, of non-discrimination and of respect for diversity in all 55 participating States.

Indeed, the OSCE may be the only international organization in the world that devotes so much attention to the crucial issue of tolerance, and this is one issue that can unite a set of diverse countries, with diverse national positions and interests. I'd like to once again particularly thank the government of Spain for its willingness to host next week's Conference and for taking a strong stand against this ages-old problem. I hope that every one of our ambassadors here attends and that every participating State demonstrates its commitment to the issues central to this conference by sending a strong delegation to this very important event – as the United States delegation, which will be headed by the Governor of the State of New York, Governor Pataki.

Tolerance is a core value and is in all of our national interests. Respect for diversity – whether it is ethnic, religious, social or political diversity – is the bedrock of a free and democratic society.

Tolerance is not a zero-sum game, and there is no such thing as “imbalance” in the fight against hatred and discrimination. A person who has hatred in their heart for any one group is at risk of learning to hate others. Nor is it a holistic exercise in the sense that a solution for one fits all. There are commonalities in dealing with intolerance, but there are also unique differences in history, in manifestation and in solutions for each form of intolerance that we have to address if we are to be successful. Too often we find ourselves in extensive discussion over that issue – and I would just say to you that, as in so many other aspects of life, one has to name a problem in order to acknowledge its uniqueness and then to successfully address it.

A person who has learned tolerance and respect for diversity knows that all human beings are basically the same, and that ethnic, religious and other differences are part of what makes our lives rich and interesting - they enrich, they do not in any way degrade the quality of life.

Therefore we should go into the Cordoba Conference proud and assured of the importance of the work that we are going to do there.

From my point of view, and from the point of view of the United States, the Cordoba Conference will definitely be a success if we accomplish three things.

Our first goal should be to generate increased political will among participating States and among our partners in civil society to combat intolerance of all kinds.

Our second goal should be to generate momentum to continue to institutionalize OSCE work on tolerance and non-discrimination, both in ODIHR and in the other institutions, as well as in the OSCE field missions.

Finally, our third goal should be to encourage States to draw on the resources and assistance available through the OSCE. These include assistance from ODIHR in the fields of legislation, law enforcement, education and the media, and awareness raising and the sharing of best practices, which is available through the excellent Personal Representatives for tolerance.

These three goals, with an emphasis on practical follow-up, should be prominently featured in the Cordoba Declaration.

I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for all of the hard work that you have done in preparing for the Conference, as well as the work of all of the participating States.