



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement in Response to the Reports of the Three Personal Representatives for Tolerance

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 23, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a great pleasure to welcome three such extremely dedicated and expert Personal Representatives here to the Permanent Council this morning and to listen to their very erudite and from the heart reports of their work.

I want to start by especially thanking Professor Weisskirchen, Ms. Crickley, and Ambassador Orhun for their very useful and informative reports and hope that all 55 participating States have taken note of what you have had to say about what you have observed so far and about your plans for the future.

One thing that all three reports have made clear is that all three of you are still in the process of orienting yourselves in the OSCE context - as you have so well described, Ms. Crickley - and have just begun really to get their work off the ground, so to speak.

These reports also confirm the United States' strong conviction that the three of you must be reappointed in 2006 for a number of reasons, including the very compelling one of simply accomplishing the tasks that you have been charged with. Looking at the challenges which you have, combining the work of all three of you into one position would blur your job descriptions and, we believe, would only serve to hinder your activity.

Allow me to say that again: the promotion of tolerance should be a proud, important theme of OSCE in the years ahead, and not a reluctant afterthought - it should be something that we look forward to continuing to do, not something that needs to be and should be put behind us by any means.

The United States understands that the mandate of the Personal Representatives is to assist relevant government agencies, to assist NGOs, and to assist public leaders as they cooperate with one another and with ODIHR in their efforts to combat discrimination and to promote tolerance. We also believe that the Representatives should provide these actors with additional tools that they can use in their efforts to be more effective and have better ideas for good practices.

The Representatives' mandate has an element of awareness raising – which is awareness that discrimination exists; awareness that intolerance has many distinct forms; awareness of best practices to combat each of these forms of intolerance; awareness of the OSCE commitments undertaken by the governments of participating States; and awareness that there are many partners who can and should work together in the struggle against intolerance.

The mandate also has an element of practical assistance. Ms. Crickley, Professor Weisskirchen and Ambassador Orhun were chosen for this job because they are experienced in particular fields of combating intolerance, and because they have a wealth of best practices to share. We hope the Personal Representatives will travel, will travel widely and will travel often during their time in office. They are emissaries, they are ambassadors in a great and important cause.

While their fields of activity might sometimes overlap, the United States does not see a need for the three Representatives to travel together at all times. Some participating States might have particular problems requiring the assistance of only one or two Representatives. Also, coordinating the travel schedules of three very busy professionals can unnecessarily hinder their activities.

We do not expect the Personal Representatives to replace ODIHR, nor would we want them to operate in a way that might drain resources from the new ODIHR Tolerance Program.

That is why the United States believes that the travel costs of the Representatives and of any ODIHR advisors that may accompany them on particular trips should be paid for out of the extra-budgetary fund established for the Personal Representatives. ODIHR advisors should not be viewed as personal assistants to the Representatives, but rather as colleagues with a complementary mandate.

ODIHR is the leading OSCE institution working on tolerance and non-discrimination, and the United States fully supports the concrete projects that ODIHR has created to assist participating States in meeting their OSCE commitments.

The Cordoba Conference showed us, however, that not all States are taking full advantage of ODIHR's assistance. In some cases, it is because leaders do not recognize that anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia, and intolerance and discrimination against Muslims and against Christians, are unfortunately a reality in their countries, and that these scourges must be constantly fought.

That is why the Personal Representatives are so important. All three of three of them - and Ambassador Orhun, Professor Weisskirchen, Ms. Crickley - all three have the political stature to draw high-level attention to the importance of the OSCE's fight against intolerance.

The United States believes that the Personal Representatives can help consolidate the ODIHR program, by increasing political will to cooperate with ODIHR and to provide ODIHR with the requested data on hate crimes legislation, on incidents of hate crime, and law enforcement practices.

Considering the fact that only 29 of our 55 participating States around this table - that is 55%, dear colleagues - have provided *complete* responses to the first hate crimes survey, the United States very much hopes that the Personal Representatives will continue drawing attention to this issue not only this year, but throughout 2006.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, the insights, expertise, and political stature of the Personal Representatives are invaluable to the OSCE and to us as participating States as we continue

our efforts to foster a greater degree of tolerance, and to combat each of the distinct forms of intolerance, throughout the OSCE region for the rest of this year and in 2006.

In closing, Professor Weisskirchen, Ms. Crickley, and Ambassador Orhun, your work on behalf of the OSCE to raise awareness and spread best practices is a vital component of our common effort. I wish you success with the activities that you have planned for the future and want to reconfirm that our State Department greatly looks forward to welcoming you in the United States in July or later this summer.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.