

**Testimony**  
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Personal Representative of the Chair in Office of the OSCE on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and  
Discrimination also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other  
Religions.

**Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe Hearing**  
**Racism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**  
***Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Washington DC, 16 July 2008***

First of all, I would like to thank you for your invitation to participate today. It is an honour to be speaking with you, particularly at this time. The USA has played a central and very significant role in the struggle against racism. The subject of today's hearing points to the continuing commitment and priority given to the issue.

As Personal Representative (PR) of the Chairman-in-Office (CiO) of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) on Combating Racism and Xenophobia and Discrimination, also focussing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and members of other religions, my mandate is to:

- Promote better coordination of OSCE participating States' efforts aimed at the effective implementation of their OSCE commitments and relevant OSCE Ministerial and Permanent Council Decisions in the field of tolerance and non-discrimination.
- Promote, cooperate and coordinate with the other two Personal Representatives of the OSCE CiO in the implementation of their respective mandates, and while maintaining the distinct focus and avoiding duplication, ensure that the activities are complementary.
- Cooperate and coordinate with ODIHR and other OSCE institutions including with the Representative of the Freedom of the Media, the High Commissioner on National Minorities.

In keeping with the topic of today's hearing, I will focus today on my mandate to combat racism and xenophobia. While I have developed a plan of work and named specific actions to be undertaken by the end of this year, I am mindful of the need to remain flexible. It is clear that emerging circumstances in the region may also lead to modifications and the introduction of new areas. I set out to welcome information and support from all partners concerned with combating racism and discrimination.

## Territory and Programmes

The OSCE with its transatlantic community of participating States presents a unique space within which to address racism and various forms of discrimination, support initiatives and responses, and promote communication and interculturalism. Without the important normative, legislative and geographic boundaries of the Council of Europe or European Union, and in view of significant regional changes over the past two decades, it is important that space can be left for open dialogue and exchange of work and programmes, naming shortcomings and learning from the experience of others. This has been evident at OSCE meetings and seminars dedicated to the discussion of combating intolerance.

The OSCE already has in place a number of decisions, missions and instruments contributing to its work. However, awareness regarding the space and the instruments can be low or patchy, and implementation of some agreed programmes and decisions has been slow. For example, few of the civil society organisations, with the exception of Jewish NGOs, are engaged, and the 2003 Action Plan on Roma and Sinti largely awaits implementation.

Raising awareness and working to ensure engagement of a range of institutions and NGOs with the OSCE can significantly contribute to realising the full potential of current OSCE decisions and instruments. In my role as PR I seek to raise awareness to this end and encourage engagement.

## Cooperation and Coordination

In various parts of the OSCE region, a number of other agencies and organisations share responsibility for responding in various ways to racism and discrimination. These include the European Monitoring Centre on racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), the European Commission on racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the UN Special Rapporteur on racism and the UN Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) Committee. There is plenty of work for all but awareness of others' remit can help avoid duplication. Developing the cooperation and coordination required to maximise the efforts of all in responding to racism and discrimination needs more than avoiding duplication. Ongoing communication, information-sharing, and high-level joint initiatives where appropriate, are required so as to ensure that value is added, rather than competing to be the agency/organisation which gets named as the best at developing an open intercultural society in the region.

In this work, account needs to be taken not only of different organisational remits and politics but also of the cultures and processes which have developed in each. Policy discourse, responses to and experiences of racism and discrimination have also developed differently and manifest themselves in various ways at different times throughout the region. For example, a link is increasingly being made between statelessness and racism.

There is also a growing challenge for States to ensure that the fight against terrorism does not undermine the struggle against racism particularly in Europe after the Madrid and London bombings.

The various agencies including the EUFRA, which has built direct links with the OSCE, are increasingly committed to working together. Over the past period there have been a number of joint agency meetings that have facilitated such communication and sharing of information. A number of agencies including EUFRA, OSCE/ODIHR, ECRI, UNHCHR and CERD are have developed joint initiatives.

#### Themes across the region and cross-cutting issues

Migration and integration and the experiences of migrants are all matters of concern across the region. Even countries like the United Kingdom, which has longstanding policies and legislation in these areas, are facing new challenges with new debates emerging about the limits of multiculturalism. Migrants -sometimes without appropriate documents - contribute to economies from Boston to Moscow. In fact the contribution of migrants overall is little acknowledged as an essential feature in a region of falling birth rates and greying populations. The constant evolution of identities and societies across the region is forgotten in the face of migrants' perceived threat to collective identities, and discriminations are made between "old" and "new" migrant groups.

In all participating States east of the United States and Canada, the problems faced by Roma, Sinti and Travellers are increasingly visible. The discriminations and racism they experience have been well documented and in a number of instances national strategies and plans and regional commitments including the OSCE Action Plan, have been put in place to address them, but as mentioned earlier implementation remains a challenge.

Equally, the National Action Plans against racism which all members of the United Nations committed to after the Durban World Conference against racism in 2001, remain to be implemented - and in some instances more comprehensively developed. They can provide a practical and integrated way for States to respond to the renewed concerns about racism which have been brought into sharp focus in the aftermath of 9/11 and continue to pose challenges for stability and human rights. It is important that ambivalence in some participating States about the difficult days of Durban does not get in the way of engagement with this helpful tool. A number of useful plans have already been developed in consultation and with the participation of civil society organisations and their implementation needs to be progressed so that exchange of practice and problems is possible.

People experiencing racism do so as women and men, old and young. Policies, plans and actions in response need to respect and integrate these differences .

## My Role

My role as Personal Representative involves a number of general support, awareness raising, cooperation and coordinating functions. I have been very excited by the possibilities it holds for furthering work to confront and address racism and discrimination, especially given the open opportunities to engage with OSCE institutions and participating States.

I have also been reinforced in my commitment to add value to the work of all regional organisations and agencies through enhanced coordination and cooperation and in the need to more actively engage in civil society initiatives against racism. I believe there is also a need to raise awareness about the realities for the discriminated of institutional, indirect and often unconscious manifestations of racism, and to contribute to developing discussion and understanding of previously less analysed areas in the discrimination field.

## Priorities

The priorities I have set include:

- Raising awareness of contemporary forms and issues regarding individual and institutional racism throughout the OSCE region including, women's experiences of racism.
- Raising awareness regarding the contribution of migrants to economic, social and cultural enhancement and supporting the development of initiatives, principles and good practice towards the integration and inclusion of migrants.
- Supporting and giving visibility to the work of OSCE and ODIHR including the excellent work being undertaken by OSCE missions in various settings.
- Promoting programmes to address racism experienced by Roma, Sinti and Travellers, in particular by supporting implementation of the OSCE Action Plan.
- Promoting civil society involvement, as well as cooperation and coordination between the OSCE, EUFRA and other regional bodies active in addressing racism and discrimination.

## Conclusion

Through my OSCE work it is increasingly evident that the EUFRA has played a key role and carried out significant work in identifying and monitoring racism in Western Europe and that there is a real need for the data collection initiatives and other lessons learned at EUFRA to extend throughout the OSCE region. What is clear is that despite relatively well developed initiatives and legislation, racism and xenophobia continue. They are pervasive phenomena and while some progress has been made we cannot afford to become complacent. Each of

us as individuals and in our particular institution has a specific role to play in a necessarily joint struggle towards the assurance of human rights and equality for all. I look forward to continuing to build and develop solidarity to ensure that individual institutions can work to add value in the struggle against racism and discrimination overall.

In the context of my mandate, it is clear that numerous and far reaching areas of work could be identified. Given the limitations and confines of my part-time role, it has been necessary to identify a number of priorities for action while at the same time acknowledging other areas of concern.