Report of OSCE-ODIHR Roundtable[1]

The Representation of Muslims in Public Discourse

Warsaw, 9 May 2006

Introduction

Many OSCE participating States[2] are simultaneously facing the challenge of managing increasingly diverse multicultural and multi-faith societies. One of the most significant obstacles posed to community cohesion in recent years has been a sharp increase in anti-Muslim sentiment, widely observed in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and July 7, 2005.   This trend has been particularly evident in public discourse, including media coverage and political rhetoric. Negative portrayals of Muslims, disproportionate coverage on issues such as extremism and violence, and one-dimensional (and often inaccurate) reporting on the Islamic faith reinforce existing stereotypes and prejudice towards Muslims, and contribute to a general climate of mistrust, fear and hostility towards Muslim communities.

The ODIHR brought together civil society representatives, media professionals and academic experts from across the OSCE region, with representatives from the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the European Union Monitoring Centre on Racism and

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[1] The ODIHR roundtable was held jointly with the OSCE's Personal Representative on combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims.
[2] The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is the world's largest regional security organization, encompassing 56 states from Vancouver to Vladivostok. The ODIHR is the OSCE institution responsible for the *human dimension* and is active in the field of human rights, democratic development, election observation, tolerance and non-discrimination and rule of law.

Xenophobia (EUMC), the OSCE Representative of Freedom of the Media and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, to discuss practical measures and solutions to address stereotypes and prejudice against Muslims in public discourse. The round table was opened by Ambassador Christian Strohal, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and Ambassador Ömür Orhun, Personal Representative of the OSCE CiO on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims[3]. Both expressed hopes that the meeting would provide opportunities to discuss concrete examples of best practices and to identify policies and practical measures to develop effective engagement with civil society as key partners in countering intolerance and discrimination against Muslims. This report presents a summary of the main topics of discussion during the roundtable and does not necessarily reflect the policy or position of the OSCE. The recommendations emerging from the roundtable were presented at the OSCE Tolerance Implementation Meeting on promoting Inter-cultural, Inter-religious and Inter-ethnic understanding[4] and will be followed up by the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

Manifestations of anti-Muslim sentiment in the Media

An anti-Muslim slant has become increasingly evident in media in the post 9/11 era and stereotypes and biased reporting are increasingly found within *mainstream media*. Participants noted that media coverage on Muslim communities was disproportionately high when compared to their percentage of the population. What coverage there is on Islam and Muslims tends to focus predominantly on negative representations such as conflict and violence in the Middle East and issues relating to terrorism and fundamentalism. Moreover, many participants noted that disproportionate airtime is allocated to those figures that present an extreme interpretation of Islam and that moderate Muslims were not able to provide the 'soundbytes' sought after by the media. Scholars and academics with a deep knowledge of Islam and the Islamic world tended to be underrepresented on television, radio or print broadcasts in favour of "experts" who follow the vision of Oriana Fallaci and Bat Ye'or. Participants agreed that since the events of 9/11, media coverage had promoted an unbalanced, one-dimensional and monolithic image of Muslim

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[3] Opening statements are attached as annexes
[4] The OSCE Tolerance Implementation Meeting on promoting Inter-cultural, Inter-religious and Inter-ethnic understanding was held 12-13 June 2006 in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

communities as prone to violence and of Islam as being incompatible with Western norms and values.

Participants also drew attention to popular concepts such as the conspiracy theory known as '*Eurabia*[5] which has been observed in elements of media and academic discourse. This powerful 'Islamophobic fantasy' describes the alleged process of political and cultural incorporation of Europe into the Islamic world. Participants highlighted how some major media outlets have used the term to describe the future of a Europe with a young, rapidly growing Muslim population, unwilling to assimilate into European countries and launching a Jihad from its inner cites. These images have been used to stir anxieties, fear and xenophobic prejudices which are later used by populist politicians to justify tougher immigration laws or limitations on religious accommodation. It was agreed that the impact and reach of the media meant that misrepresentations and stereotyping of Islam and Muslims had negatively affected public attitudes and contributed to a public climate of hostility towards Muslims.

The presence of Islamophobic language and imagery in the wider media including movies, contemporary literature, comics, cartoons, and computer games was also addressed. In particular, the demise of the cold war and beginning of the first gulf-war saw the emergence of Muslims and Arabs as the 'new enemy'. Muslim characters, in science fiction novels or Hollywood movies have typically been portrayed as villains, extremists, as sinister, ruthless and double-dealing; and images depicting Turkey's bid to enter the European Union have sometimes portrayed it as the 'Black Death' for Europe. These images *can* and *do* play a large role in shaping public imagination and attitudes and function as vehicles for disseminating specific ideas, agendas and stereotypes. Many participants attributed the roots of anti-Muslim stereotypes in mass media in part to a lack of knowledge and understanding of Muslims and the Islamic faith. Correspondingly, solutions to anti-Muslim prejudice must also focus on education to counter xenophobic stereotypes and prejudices and promote respect and mutual understanding. Other participants attributed stereotyping to political agendas rather than ignorance – and drew parallels between the vilification of Jewish Communities in Czarist Russia and pre-Nazi Germany and the present day situation of Muslims

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[5] The concept of Eurabia originally coined by Bat Ye'or has been used widely by the Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci and the French essayist Alain Finkielkraut

and Arabs in Europe. In both cases, stereotypes have attributed similar characteristics to each group – mainly that they are decadent, subversive, alien and pose a threat to Europe.

Participants also drew attention to *anti-Western* stereotypes and propaganda disseminated by fundamentalist organizations within and outside of Europe and supported by some Islamic states. The need to take steps to counter *both anti-Western and Islamophobic stereotypes* in the media and in political discourse was stressed, especially as these are often propagated by extremists on both sides who wish to create divisions between Muslim populations and European society. Participants underscored the importance, however, of differentiating between anti Western propaganda and legitimate and valid criticism of public policies; Muslim communities residing in Europe should have the right to dissent from their governments without being labeled 'disloyal', just as European citizens do.

Manifestations of Anti-Muslim sentiment in Political Discourse

With regard to xenophobic language in political discourse, two key developments were underlined; an increase in the use of xenophobic discourse used by *mainstream* politicians since 9/11, and the rise of extremist parties on the Right in both local and national governments in many Western European states[6] - a situation less likely 20 years ago. As a response to the increasing share of votes taken by far-right parties, many mainstream parties began to adopt elements of the rhetoric and public policies espoused by these parties, for example on immigration issues. Essentially, over the last two decades, the use of xenophobic language has moved from the fringe to the centre of the political spectrum. A notable shift has occurred in the way that mainstream politicians and political parties talk about immigration and multiculturalism, and specifically in the way that one particular group - Muslims - have been singled out as an alleged threat to 'Western' societies. The increasing trend towards a 'culturalist discourse' and 'rhetoric of conflict' was also underlined by participants; this refers to a development whereby debates on immigrant and ethnic minorities, and particularly Muslims focus upon irreconcilable cultural and civilization differences with the effect of

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[6] Since the 1990s, we have seen the entry of the Lega Nord into the Italian centre-right coalition, followed in 2002 by the entry of the right-wing Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) into a coalition with the Socialist Party (ÖVP) as well as the growth of other arch-conservative movements such as the Swiss People's Party (SVP) and the Progress Party in Norway. In more recent years, we have also observed the increasing popularity of the Danish People's Party in Denmark and the British National Party in the UK.

drawing boundaries between cultures and marking Muslims as the 'other'. Several examples of how this culturalist discourse was used by mainstream political leaders were given[7]. Such discourse clearly implies the existence of two competing identities that are fundamentally irreconcilable and serve to exacerbate existing obstacles in the path of integration.

The events of 9/11 further reinforced and accelerated this movement. Since 9/11, the widespread belief that Islam and democracy are incompatible has permeated throughout Europe. On the extreme-Right, but also within the ranks of several democratic parties, the "*clash of civilizations*" theory became central to the discourse and agenda. This is the case of the Italian Lega Nord, the French Mouvement pour la France, and the Groep Wilders party in the Netherlands; significantly, these parties are not fascist, have no common history with the extreme-Right, are inside the political system rather than on the fringe but have a very specific target - the Muslim – whether s/he is an immigrant or citizen, practicing Muslim or not. To counter such trends, governments must acknowledge that xenophobic and anti-Muslim elements are increasingly used in *mainstream* political discourse, and draw clear lines between acceptable and unacceptable rhetoric, as has been done with regard to racism and anti-Semitism. Political signals from local and national leaders which include the use of language which could stir up prejudice, hatred or hostility were highlighted as a paramount concern due to their impact on media reporting, on ethnic and religious minorities and on public perceptions and societal attitudes[8].

Correlations between Anti-Muslim Discourse and Public Policy

What are the implications of anti-Muslim discourse on public policy, and what effect do public policies have on public perceptions and public discourse? Two key areas – discourse and policies on migration, integration and multiculturalism on the one hand, and discourse and public policy in the context of the 'war on terror' on the other hand were discussed. Overall, many participants agreed that negative public discourse reinforced discriminatory policies in the private sector and

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[7] Participants provided several examples of anti-Muslim political discourse including the post-9/11 comments by Silvio Berlusconi, then Prime Minister of Italy stating that European civilization was superior to the Islamic one; French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin's statement on the full membership of Turkey in the EU which referred to the 'floods of Islamism' as submerging the 'river of secularism' and comments by CSU/CDU parliamentary leader in Germany that "Turks are different from Germans in culture and mentality, and want to stay different".

[8] Participants highlighted instances of discriminatory and biased elements used in political rhetoric, including statements by political parties which compared Islam to a cancer or plague affecting Europe.

public institutions, and that simultaneously, discriminatory public policies also affected public perceptions, opinions and discourse on Muslims and the Islamic faith. For instance, in countries where the government banned the hijab in public positions, private companies followed suit. The banning of the hijab and introduction of 'citizenship tests' had also reinforced perceptions of Muslims as alien from Western societies and contributed to a climate of increasing intolerance for cultural and ethnic diversity.

Participants pointed to a direct correlation between official public discourse on issues such as immigration, integration and multiculturalism and the adoption of legislation and policies that discriminated against Muslims in this regard. Some noted that in Europe, the association of national identity with ethnic identity makes it difficult for states to incorporate new communities into their national self-definition and historical narrative - after generations of living in Germany one may still be seen as a Turk, and in France, as an Algerian as opposed to a national of the country. Additionally, the political discourse in many European countries still challenges the notion that the country is a country of immigration. As a result, minority groups tend to be excluded from the official narratives of some states and this ambivalence and struggle around national identity is often reflected in the lack of coherent and managed integration strategies adopted by many states. As a result, integration in many parts of Europe has in reality, remained more of a one-way than two-way street with the onus placed upon Muslim communities. Muslims have been blamed in both media and political commentaries for not working harder to integrate or participate in the mainstream, and moderate Muslim groups blamed for not being visible or active enough. In doing so, some pointed out that governments have largely failed to recognize that integration requires managed strategies, that the enactment of relevant policies and measures should be the responsibility of the State, and that most persons, given the opportunity, *want* to integrate and participate in the cultural, social and political fabric. States should provide the space and capacity to facilitate the integration process through the inclusion of Muslims in the official public discourse and policies of the state.

Multicultural policies have also come under increasing strain in recent years most notably since the London bombings of July 7 2005. National political figures, community leaders and media commentators have criticized multiculturalism for keeping communities apart and for providing 'too

much space' to Muslims'. Far-right parties, and to some extent mainstream parties, have been successful in making political capital out of these issues, such as in the case of the introduction of citizenship 'loyalty' tests for Muslim and other minority groups. While multiculturalism implies a 'common sense of belonging'[9], many Muslim communities across Europe have experienced a marked deterioration in their sense of belonging and an increased sense of marginalization and exclusion from society. Media and political statements which propagate the conspiracy theory known as 'Eurabia' or which serve to reinforce messages of the 'otherness' of Muslims have had a powerful impact on perceptions of migrants and immigration policy; calls for halting immigration from the Muslim world have become increasingly louder and accepted in the mainstream and in 2005, the riots in France were initially interpreted as a clash of cultures, while the socio-economic dimensions of the conflict were largely ignored.

Participants also drew attention to language employed in public discourse which added to the 'religious colouration' given to (political) terrorism including statements made by mainstream public figures – academics, politicians and community leaders – which suggested that Muslims are hard-wired for violence and that the Islamic faith inclines towards militancy. Public statements and media language which refer to Muslim Fundamentalism, Islamic terrorism and Islamo-Fascism taint all Muslims as threats to national security, and can be used to legitimize curtailments of civil liberties and due process of law in the context of the 'war on terror'. Participants pointed to the creation of a discourse of 'the other' and of the 'enemy within' which has been used to publicly justify domestic policies in the fight against terrorism that disproportionately impact particular communities and which have effectively resulted in the creation of separate criminal justice systems. Official political discourse which creates a sense of 'us' and 'them' was cited as deepening divides and increasing alienation, just as acts of terror committed under the pretext of religion further increase xenophobia.

Discussions in these sessions also underlined that while public discourse can and does affect policies, public policy equally has an impact upon public discourse and perceptions. Policies and measures enacted in the 'war on terror' - curtailment of civil rights and citizenship rights;

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[9] Multiculturalism as defined in the words of Lord Bikhu Parekh refers to the idea of 'political unity without cultural uniformity and the cultivation amongst citizens of both the common sense of belonging and the willingness to respect and cherish deep cultural differences'

introduction of detention without trial, internment, and extraordinary rendition – tend to disproportionately impact Muslims and Arabs, create images of alien and suspect communities and give the impression that two separate criminal justice systems have been (justifiably) created. Integration and citizenship laws have also been deployed as an adjunct to counter-terror laws. With respect to integration policy, proposed or real bans on the hijab in parts of Europe have created perceptions of Muslims as alien or incompatible with Western norms. Participants recommended therefore, that all official policies including security and counter-terrorism legislation should be checked for their racial equality dimension.

Policies and Measures to Create a More Balanced & Inclusive Representation of Muslims

Participants stressed that both official policies and official discourse must acknowledge demographic changes in Europe. Europe needs a new self-identity and a new concept of self based upon an acknowledgement of the contributions of all the different groups – and many agreed that a starting point was the formal educational system. Creating a new inclusive history and narrative of Europe could entail reviewing curricula and school materials for bias or limited interpretations of history, and creating a more complete account of the historical and present day links between 'European' and 'Islamic' civilizations including Islamic contributions to music, art and science and the sustained interaction that has shaped the Europe we have today. The teaching of an 'inclusive' 'human' history would help to move away from an 'us' and 'them' approach.

On integration policy, participants discussed the similarity between labour migration patterns of Muslims in many European countries in the 1950s and 1960s due to a demand for industrial labour[10]. When those sectors began to collapse in the 1960s, many found themselves unemployed and effectively trapped in poorer inner city areas. These socio-economic inequalities have been a significant factor in the development of so-called self-styled self-segregation of Muslim communities and pose significant barriers to integration. By over-emphasizing cultural differences, multicultural policies have failed to address larger questions relating to differences in socio-

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[10] Migration patterns tended to correspond with colonial ties; for instance, South Asians predominantly migrated to the UK, Turks to Germany and workers from Maghreb to France

economic equalities and opportunities. Policies to address marginalization should focus on providing communities with education, empowerment, equality of opportunities and confidence in social institutions. This is a vital factor in reversing the increasing alienation and radicalization within certain sections of Muslim communities today. Muslim communities must also take responsibility for mobilizing and participating in political processes in order to effect change in both policies and the official discourse. Some however pointed to the impact of counter-terror policies and measures on the communities' perceptions and specifically their trust in the 'system'. How these communities perceive governmental action towards them, whether real or not, influence how and whether Muslim/Arab communities choose to participate in political and other processes.

Most agreed that while governments should encourage responsible public discourse especially by politicians, *it was not up to the state to regulate media*. NGOs on the other hand could offer educational initiatives that promote intercultural understanding and mutual respect without compromising freedom of speech. Some referred to states which recognized Islam as an official religion and the positive effects this had on public discourse as Muslim communities were able to speak on their own behalf.   Other suggestions for Muslim communities included a more proactive engagement with public and social institutions in their host countries; working on tolerance and non-discrimination issues within the larger human rights movement; and taking steps to ensure they retain independence from governments in the Islamic World and recognize that their priorities lie in Europe. Many participants underlined that Muslim communities can not and should not import problems of the Islamic World to Europe and similarly they should not look for solutions to their challenges in the Islamic world but seek 'home-grown' solutions. On the other hand, participants also commented on political leaders in many countries who have attempted to 'socially engineer' Muslim leadership and to create an 'acceptable Islam'. Divisions have been created between 'good' and 'bad' Muslims and 'appropriate' interlocutors have sometimes been hand picked by authorities. All agreed that leadership within Muslim communities should to a large degree be left to develop organically and secular governments should play no role in creating an 'acceptable' Islam.

Forward Looking Approaches: Improving the Representation of Muslims in Media

This session addressed the question of how Media could improve its reporting on diversity-related issues and several media practitioners shared their experiences in this respect. Obstacles to professional or balanced journalism include tight deadlines, the lack of ability or interest to cover issues in-depth and a search for *sound bytes* (strong statements, sensationalism, polarized positions and 'quotable quotes'). The impact of this 'reporting reality' is often particularly pronounced when it comes to media reports on Muslims, Roma, Women and other minority groups who do not have a properly articulated voice within the media. Journalists have a responsibility to reflect the diversity of views, interests and voices existing within every community and society; 'responsible journalism' means reporting in a manner that is fair, accurate, and provides a complete and contextualized coverage of the issue at hand. Most participants agreed that states do not have a role to play with regard to media regulation, and that journalism should be regulated by professional media bodies.

It was acknowledged that the media is not monolithic and that there are institutions and groups that are interested in dialogue and improving reporting on diversity-related issues. In general, however, while Muslims form a substantial minority population in many OSCE countries, many media professionals cited a lack of knowledge and understanding about the community. Journalists, like the mainstream society are susceptible to subjectivity and report based on a personal/cultural view of the world. Intercultural understanding was seen as pre-requisite for improving professionalism and quality in reporting, and the avoidance of stereotypes and language inciting prejudice and hostility as a key component of ethical and professional journalism.

Education and awareness-raising for media professionals - by way of ongoing, updated and practical training – presented a means to address unbalanced, partial and misleading reporting as well as the need to avoid terms that are not appropriately elaborated and that reinforce pre-existing stereotypes. Practitioners underlined the need for initiatives to reach editors and professional bodies as well as journalists. Formal diversity training at the academic level would provide students of journalism with an increased understanding of how to report comprehensively on diversity-related issues as well as the need to reflect diversity in recruitment and programming. Dialogue between journalists from different cultural backgrounds was also underscored as an important prerequisite for countering ignorance and misinformation and for increasing knowledge of

intercultural sensitivities. While the need for such programmes was clear, many pointed to a lack of existing diversity-related educational initiatives or cross-cultural dialogue targeted to the media sector.

Developing Effective Media Relations: The Role for Civil Society

The representation of Muslims in the media had been a long-standing concern for many of the NGOs present, and they provided examples of initiatives they had developed in order to encourage Muslim communities to become a media *resource* as opposed to the *subject* of reporting[11]. The ability to provide concise, objective, dispassionate and timely arguments is essential to meeting the media's need for sound-bytes under time constraints and offers a means for groups to assume command of the image that is portrayed on their behalf. In this regard, participants agreed that Muslim community representatives should be *available* and easily *accessible* to media personnel by phone and email; should ensure that knowledgeable and articulate representatives were at hand to talk about the issues in question for journalists; and should develop media advocacy systems including a proactive approach to developing and distributing press releases, talking points and relevant materials to journalists on issues and events of interest.

Other key determinants in encouraging more balanced representations of Muslims in the media rested on a readiness to talk 'not only about Muslims and Islam' but larger domestic and international social, economic and environmental issues and also on the increasing involvement of Muslims in media programming and producing. Sometimes, though not always, biased or partisan coverage was inadvertent and unconscious and caused by insufficient knowledge or lack of attention to detail. In response, some NGOs have developed tools to raise the level of knowledge and understanding of Muslim communities. Examples of good practice in this regard include the *Pocket Guide* produced by the Muslim Council of Britain and the recently published handbook *British Muslims: Media Guide* developed by the British Council and Association of Muslim Social Scientists and written by Ehsan Masood.

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[11] For a useful example of such work, see the Media Relations Handbook developed for civil society by the Canadian Council for Muslim Women and available at their website http://www.ccmw.com/publications/media_relations.htm

Some participants also stressed that the media sphere is changing rapidly - digital television, satellite and internet allow people to choose what information and news they receive. Governmental policies to promote media literacy and media awareness would allow persons to make informed choices and media education for young children would raise awareness of the role and impact of media on perceptions. Suggestions for tackling distorted representation in media also included systematic monitoring of media coverage and comparative analysis across states in order to get a fuller picture of how minority groups and issues are reported in media and television broadcasting; encouraging everyday media, such as soap operas to represent diversity and deal with social issues such as Islamophobia or discrimination, and increasing the involvement of Muslims in mainstream programming and broadcasting.

Coalition-Building: Learning from Collective Experience

Questions were raised as to how Muslim communities could do more in terms of understanding the experience of other minority groups who had experienced exclusion or disadvantage such as African Americans in the United States or the Jewish experience in Western Europe. The need to develop alliances with other groups who have faced discrimination including Jewish communities was raised as an important first step for Muslim NGOs. Some participants pointed to existing partnerships between Muslim and Jewish communities on specific projects and others pointed to difficulties in dialogue and cooperation between the two communities.

Improving the Representation of Muslims in Political Discourse

Participants stressed that political leadership had an important role to play in improving the representation of Muslim communities in political discourse. In order to counter the negative public perception of Muslims, politicians and local community leaders should take a strong stance against language that portrays Muslims as 'alien', or security threats and resist the temptation to curtail civil liberties. Political leaders also needed to avoid blaming Muslims for the phenomena of terrorism, which only serves to heighten fear and hostility to Muslims. Attention was also drawn to the 'sociological blindness of political leaders' including the widespread assumption in the 'West' that we live in a secularized world, and some argued that political leaders could do more to recognize

the existential value of Islam for Muslims instead of discounting it as a cultural heritage or set of ritual practices. On the positive side, participants noted that political leaders should seek to research and address the root causes of terrorism such as lack of democracy and freedom, injustice, poverty, alienation and deprivation, and that efforts to promote greater understanding and awareness about religion and multiculturalism be intensified.

Participants also underscored that the responsibility of improving the representation of Muslims in political discourse rests to some degree on the shoulders of Muslim civil society who need to increase engagement and political participation in local and national structures. Greater political representation would allow for advocacy on behalf of the mainstream Muslim community and for engagement with issues relating to civil rights, inclusion, and empowerment and to redress grievances. Another major challenge for Muslim communities and governmental authorities is to improve government-civil society dialogue and *partnerships*. In this regard, the issue of how Muslim communities could prove an asset to governments as opposed to a threat was raised. Many agreed that Muslim communities would be considered a threat if they were 'only speaking to themselves', allowed radicalisation to occur amongst youth, and were unable to deal with emerging identity crises they were faced with. Conversely, Muslim communities could be viewed as an asset if they can engage successfully in partnership with governmental authorities and in coalition-building with other communities on broader social issues, and if they are able to exercise financial and intellectual independence from foreign influence – be that Muslim countries or foreign groups abroad.

Participants cautioned that Muslim communities could not be held accountable for systematically addressing radicalisation or terrorism without the support of Government. Many agreed upon recommendations to establish advisory committees at all governmental levels on those policies and measures that affect Muslim communities and some referred to the regular engagement of some US state departments with community-based organizations in order to address current challenges as they relate to Muslim, Arab and South Asian communities in the US. The post 7/7 UK model of seven working task groups and committees was cited by some participants as a good model; others referred to lack of follow-up and insufficient resources given to these working groups.

Active participation and dialogue represent the means for Muslim communities to engage with problem-solving at the domestic level and to show that they can be part of the solution to challenges relating to integration, multiculturalism, radicalization, exclusion and terrorism. Participants stressed that *it is up to both Muslim communities and the government to choose whether to engage or disengage in dialogue and partnerships.* A common language between government and community based organizations is essential for dialogue; for instance terms such as Islamists or Islamo-fascism give religious legitimacy to extremists by putting the *islamo-* or *islam-* prefix before their action. Participants also questioned who are defined as moderates? Some stressed that the 'moderate' has to become de facto, the secularist, and that these 'moderates' typically have little traction or influence with Muslim mainstream communities. Attention was thus drawn to the need to redefine the perception of 'moderate' within Muslim and mainstream communities from one who supports status quo policies to one who is simultaneously effective in addressing legitimate grievances as well as creating channels of reform within Muslim communities so that it is able to deal with the realities of alienation and radicalization.

To summarize the forward-looking approaches to dealing with discriminatory or biased public discourse and public policies, many participants underlined that both formal and non-formal education and awareness-raising programmes were key to preventing prejudice, stereotypes and misinformation about Muslim communities. It was also agreed that there was no other alternative but to pursue increased engagement and dialogue. Muslim communities should increase their representation and participation in politics, in media programming and in social and public institutions and also become increasingly involved in advising and implementing governmental programmes that affect not just Muslim communities but the larger society. Governments should engage a wide and representative set of voices from Muslim communities in consultative discussions on policies that will affect them. Dialogue at the local, national and international fora including within the OSCE framework must strive to include a broad-section of voices from today's pluralistic societies in order to move towards an increasing recognition and realization of the goals of mutual respect and understanding. Recommendations for governments, media professionals and civil society are further elaborated below.

Roundtable Recommendations*

These recommendations were circulated at the OSCE Tolerance Implementation Meeting on "Promoting Inter-Cultural, Inter-Religious and Inter-Ethnic Understanding", June 2006, Almaty Kazakhstan

Recommendations to Governments

1. Take positive measures to acknowledge, accept and reflect the multi-cultural and multi-faith character of our societies by developing national narratives and national identities to be inclusive in scope, and to acknowledge the positive contributions of all groups to the local and national community. It should be recognized that participation and inclusion pave the way for integration and that the provision of opportunities for integration rests in the first instance with government.

2. Consider enacting or strengthening, where appropriate, legislation that prohibits discrimination based on, or incitement to hate crimes motivated by, race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

3. Recognize the moral imperative and social responsibility of political leaders to publicly condemn hate motivated acts including the use of language that stirs up prejudice, hatred or hostility on the basis of race, ethnic origin, or faith, and take concrete steps to encourage responsible and ethical public discourse through:
    - Addressing the increasing and widespread use of intolerant language and particularly anti-Muslim rhetoric by mainstream political actors;
    - Considering the adoption of commitments in line with the ECRI Declaration on the use of racist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic elements in political discourse (adopted on 17 March 2005) or the Charter of European Parties for a Non-Racist Society.

4. Systematically reject the identification of terrorism and violent extremism with any religion or belief, culture, ethnic group, nationality or race. Policies that target or profile particular communities as a threat to security should be avoided. Governments must also ensure that anti-terrorism legislation and measures comply with legally-binding international human rights obligations and standards as well as OSCE commitments;

5. Address the *root* causes of anti-Muslim prejudice through education. Anti-discrimination educational policies should be comprehensive in scope and include but not be limited to:
    - review of the accuracy and fairness of representation of Islam in textbooks and educational materials;
    - dispelling of common misrepresentations and myths about Muslims and Islam;
    - integration of Muslim contributions into all aspects of the school curricula particularly in literature, history, science and art; and
    - incorporation of citizenship and diversity as regular components of class-based teaching in order to develop genuine inter-cultural and interfaith respect and understanding.

6. Address political and public exclusion of Muslims by way of sustained engagement and dialogue. Clear efforts should be undertaken to address needs and interests of Muslim communities and work towards creating genuine dialogue and joint partnerships to address common challenges. The formulation of thematic advisory committees or working groups on issues such as integration, freedom of religion, education, counter-terrorism represent examples of constructive and effective practice in this regard.

7. Take steps to monitor, record and report on experiences of discrimination of Muslims in the private and public sectors within and across Europe in order to formulate appropriate policy responses and promote equality of opportunities for Muslims.

Recommendations to OSCE Institutions

1. 'Mainstream' the human dimension into all departments, policies and projects, including all work related to security and counter-terrorism. The protection and equality of all racial, ethnic and religious groups should form a cornerstone of the human dimension, including communities that are disproportionately targeted by discriminatory discourse, counter-terror legislation and hate-motivated acts.

2. Intensify its cooperation and coordination with the relevant international partners in this field, notably the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, the European Union Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia and the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination. All international partners must strive to strike up a coherent agenda and mutually reinforcing activities in order to move forward. Such activities could be integrated and linked to the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All (2007) and the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008). In addition to coordinating efforts, these organizations must review on a regular basis, the follow-up on and implementation of recommendations and commitments.

3. Consider supporting an international network of NGOs in media monitoring, in order that quantitative and qualitative data on discriminatory discourse can be collected and compared across the 55 OSCE participating States. The results and impact of this initiative could be shared with all participating States, and could form the basis for a seminar that brings together journalists and NGOs in order to promote intercultural and interfaith respect and diversity. The OSCE could consider working in cooperation with the Council of Europe and European Commission on such a project.

4. Highlight national governmental agencies that have established constructive working relationships with Muslim communities to address challenges relating to discrimination, integration, education, law enforcement and community cohesion. The ODIHR could convene a working level meeting where governmental-NGO counterparts share experiences and best practices, disseminate tools and discuss effective strategies for tackling the current problems seen today.

5. Support capacity building initiatives for Muslim community-based organizations through practical training workshops on relevant issues, facilitating channels of dialogue between

civil society and government, and creating opportunities for network-building between affected groups – e.g. Roma and Muslims.

Recommendation to Media

1. Provide ongoing and regular training on how to report diversity-related issues in general, and on Muslims and Islam in particular. Training and educational initiatives should be practical and comprehensive in scope, and targeted towards editors and practicing journalists, professors and students of journalism, and media standards bodies.

2. Take positive steps to strengthen media bodies so that they have an increased capacity to assess and regulate media quality, and particularly to develop professional codes of conduct and ethical standards for dealing with religious and cultural issues, including the rights of minorities, and the avoidance of stereotypes and language that incites prejudice, hostility and tensions.

3. Promote dialogue and cooperation between media professionals and journalists of different cultures in order to promote intercultural understanding, raise awareness of different world views and personal subjectivity in reporting, and in order to promote an exchange of best practices in responsible, ethical and quality reporting.

Recommendations to Muslim-based Community Organizations/NGOs

1. Become familiar with international commitments on tolerance and discrimination including those undertaken under the framework of the OSCE Ljubljana Ministerial Council Decision (2005) and ask respective governments what has been done in terms of implementation and follow-up.

2. Adopt a wider human-rights focus or equality of opportunity approach to cases of discrimination, rather than a reliance on religious rights-based approaches.

3. Develop proactive media strategies in order to provide journalists with consistent and reliable information on issues they are likely to cover. To this end, NGOs are encouraged to build relations with journalists, be easily accessible to outreach by media, take the first steps to engage, and have information readily available on key issues.

4. Take concrete steps to build bridges with other communities impacted by discrimination and intolerance, and particularly to learn from the historical experiences of the Jewish community in Western Europe and African American civil rights movement in the US. In this regard, develop coalitions in order to explore similar experiences and challenges, and to share examples of good practices and capacity building in terms of education, political empowerment, advocacy and lobbying. The upcoming OSCE Tolerance Implementation Meeting in Kazakhstan represents an ideal venue for such coalition-building.

5. Develop procedures and methods to inform the Government about the needs and interests of Muslims. Policy discourse and agendas can only be changed through sustained

participation in political processes, and increased government-community dialogue should form a cornerstone of this strategy. The Muslim community can be an asset and resource to the Government when engaged as partners in developing solutions to common problems, and should take all necessary steps to communicate this to relevant agencies.

6. Intensify efforts to mobilize and empower individuals within Muslim communities to participate in public and political life. Positive steps to increase awareness of relevant political institutions and processes at the local and national levels as well as civic duties and values are key. Efforts to broaden participation to the public sphere including in corporations, schools, community-based organizations and initiatives should not be overlooked.

7. Undertake consistent and sustained measures to counter anti-Western propaganda and ideologies, and specifically those that target the vulnerable such as youth. The broader community must be mobilized to create a positive bulwark against ideologies that wish to create tensions and divisions in this regard.

Annexes

Opening Remarks
Ambassador Christian Strohal,
Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you here today to this roundtable meeting on the Representation of Muslims in Public Discourse. The meeting, as you know, has been convened in order to address the various manifestations of anti-Muslim sentiment in public discourse that we have increasingly witnessed in recent years; it is part of an overall effort of the OSCE in this regard, to which I will come back in a moment.

At the outset, I would like to thank all of you for having traveled to Warsaw for this event, in particular Ambassador Ömür Orhun, the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-In-Office. He continuously has been a strong support not only for the Chairman, but also for my Office and for the Organization as a whole in raising issues of concern and seeing to it that they are being followed through. I also welcome especially the Representatives of the OIC, for the first time in our meetings, and of the ECRI and the EUMC. We are very grateful to all moderators and introducers for your engagement. Finally, we are grateful to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly for being represented by Mr. Hoglund, in particular as they held a special debate at their Winter Session earlier this year on this subject.

Briefly, I would like to provide you with some background as to why this event has been convened, and, perhaps more importantly, to provide you with some indications as to how and why the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe – which is the largest regional security organization in the world - came to deal with issues relating to intolerance and discrimination against Muslims. The OSCE is comprised of 55 participating States from across Europe, Central Asia and North America. The ODIHR is the principal institution of the OSCE responsible for the *human* dimension.

In view of the worrying trends I mentioned at the outset, OSCE participating States have undertaken concrete commitments to promote tolerance and combat discrimination, including intolerance against Muslims; these are the results of a number of high-level conferences addressing issues relating to freedom of religion or belief, migration and integration, hate crimes and hate speech, tolerance education and training for criminal justice officials, and the analysis of tools such as media, legal frameworks and specialized bodies to help counter discrimination and intolerance, and provide remedies for impacted communities.

We at the ODIHR, in turn, have developed our programme on tolerance and non-discrimination in order to provide the participating States with the necessary tools to

implement these commitments. This includes capacity building and outreach to civil society.

As part of its outreach to Muslim communities in the OSCE region, the ODIHR already convened, as you know, a first roundtable meeting with representatives of Muslim NGOs in 2005 in order to discuss key concerns facing Muslim communities in the OSCE region and identify areas for cooperation between the OSCE, participating States and civil society. The event also served as an opportunity to promote networking and coalition-building between NGOs working to counter the various strands of discrimination including racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance against Muslims.

Today's meeting serves as a follow-up event to the first roundtable event, and is part of our continuing engagement of representatives of Muslim communities in OSCE fora. You will notice also the representation of other partner OSCE institutions and of participating States, who are with us today in an observer capacity – so that they may be appraised more fully of the key issues facing your communities, and, more importantly, what solutions and proposals are required in order to counter the phenomenon. Public discourse bears special responsibility: it can work as a weapon, or as an instrument of building respect and trust.

In this spirit, I encourage you to speak openly and constructively. Make full use of this meeting as an informal, but meaningful, occasion to look forward, to identify good practice, and to recommend further action. And to think about the way that we can build bridges, coalitions and establish methods for engaging all communities in the battle against discrimination and intolerance. Now is the time to build trust, cooperation and mutual understanding.

I look forward to your recommendations – recommendations that our office will work hard to implement, with your support, of course. And this is the moment to thank Jo-Anne Bishop and her team, especially Nav Purewall, for their untiring work, their preparations for this meeting, and the follow-up they will undoubtedly pursue. We hope that at the latest at this year's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in October, some fruits of your work will already be visible.

I wish you – and us – a successful meeting.

Remarks by Ambassador Ömür Orhun, Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination Against Muslims

Opening Remarks

First of all, I would like to welcome all participants to this meeting and wish a successful and fruitful discussion. Ambassador Strohal has just explained the purpose and the context of the meeting. On my part, let me briefly mention a few additional points.

This is the second Muslim NGO Roundtable Meeting the ODIHR and myself are organizing. The first was held on 27th September 2005. The main objective of last year's Roundtable was to learn about key concerns facing Muslim communities in the OSCE region, to facilitate discussion on prospective areas of cooperation and engagement between the civil society and governments.

Why a specific NGO Roundtable only for Muslims? During various OSCE events and meetings we recognized that as compared to other thematic areas, NGO's dealing with intolerance and discrimination against Muslims are underrepresented, not that well organized and staffed. So, the purpose was twofold:

    a. To try to build NGO capacity in this specific field,

    b. To address various forms of discrimination, stigmatization and exclusion of Muslims especially in Western countries. (Lack of religious accommodation, failures in integration policies, persistence of stereotyping of Islam and Muslims and increase in hate crimes.)

Last year's Roundtable in that respect was a first of its kind and was productive. The report of that meeting was widely distributed and is also available to the participants of this gathering. That report includes not only problem areas, but also recommendations and best practices, where available.

This year, the main topic is somewhat more focused and we will mainly be dealing with representation of Muslims in public discourse. What we mean is firstly political discourse and secondly media representation. I believe the so called "cartoon crisis" underlined the necessity to give priority to the important issue of representation.

Many OSCE states are simultaneously facing challenges of managing increasingly diverse multicultural and multi-faith societies. One of the significant recent challenges posed to integration and community cohesion has been the sharp increase in anti Muslim sentiment. Social climate facing Muslims deteriorated, and we started observing a growing tendency in public discourse, both in the political life and also in the media, to reflect a distorted image of Islam and Muslims. Negative and unbalanced images in public discourse play a crucial role in affecting public perceptions and attitudes towards Muslims. In that respect, I would like to refer to the Ministerial Decision adopted in Ljubljana in December 2005, the operative paragraph of which is included in the Roundtable Outline. Therefore, our aim is to counter racist, xenophobic and all other forms of discrimination in mainstream media and political discourse.

I will not go over the program, which is in front of you. However, let me briefly mention my mandate. I was appointed as the Personal Representative of the Chairman-in- Office of the OSCE on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims at the end of 2004 and the gist of my mandate aims to achieve better coordination of the activities of participating States in this field. In that respect, I conducted five country visits, made quite some public appearances and tried to put my views in articles and press releases.

I hope during this Roundtable participants will share information on their experiences, expectations and good practices, and look at how governments, media organizations and civil society can respond to intolerant and discriminatory elements against Muslims in public discourse. Findings and recommendations of this meeting will be compiled in a report and will be brought to the attention of the participants of the OSCE Meeting that will be held on 12 – 13 June 2006 in Almaty/Kazakhstan on Inter-Cultural, Inter-Ethnic and Inter-Religious Dialogue.

I wish a successful and fruitful meeting and results. Finally, I would like to thank to the Director of the ODIHR and the ODIHR's staff for their efforts to organize this meeting.

Concluding Remarks

At the end of a long but fruitful and very lively debate, let me share some of my conclusions and impressions. But before that, I would like to thank to the moderators and to the presenters for their inspiring statements as well as to all participants who took an active part in this meeting.

We seem to agree on the diagnosis of the sickness, but somewhat differ how to cure it. There were quite a number of remarks to a "missing strategy" to deal with the issue at hand. This is quite normal, since we represent pluralistic societies with different conditions. I believe one necessity has emerged from our meeting, in that we need clear definitions of some terminology, like integration, multiculturalism, Islamophobia, tolerance and Islamic terrorism. We all use these terms repeatedly, but attribute different meanings or contexts to them.

Ms. Nav Purewall will now share with you some of the recommendations that we have been able to note. A fuller version of these recommendations will be included in the final report. Before giving the floor to Ms. Purewall, let me underline a few additional points.
- Your recommendations centered on the necessity of respect, diversity, inclusion, participation, empowerment and a mental attitude of "not us versus them".
- Integration was repeatedly mentioned as the core issue. But how to achieve true and structured integration?
- The remarks repeatedly mentioned on the need for education is a point I also whole heartedly share.
- Monitoring and uniformity in legislation were also points that seem to have wide acceptance. In that respect, the call for sharing good practices is a most pertinent one.
- The need for International Organizations to share a common agenda was stressed.
- Removing double standards, having better dialogue, working together are also points that merit attention. In that respect, wider human rights for all have also been rightly mentioned.
- The greater part of our debate centered on the role of the politicians, especially of mainstream parties, and the media responsibility. Training of journalists and self regulatory media bodies are issues that need more attention.

- We have also touched upon the responsibilities of the Muslim communities and of the individual Muslims.

The ODIHR and I would like to continue with the practice of Muslim NGO Roundtables. I would like to urge you to send to the ODIHR and to myself your views on this point, as well as your proposals for the main topic of the next Muslim NGO Roundtable. Finally, I would like to express my deep appreciation to all the staff of the ODIHR, first and foremost to Jo-Anne Bishop and to Nav Purewall, but also to others that worked behind the scenes, for all their hard work and contribution to this meeting, which I believe met its objectives.