



OSCE CHAIRMANSHIP CONFERENCE ON TOLERANCE AND DIVERSITY 20 October 2016

PRE-CONFERENCE for CIVIL SOCIETY: 19 October 2016

Venue: Federal Foreign Office, Berlin

CONCEPT NOTE

*“Our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and the test of our civilization.”
(Gandhi)*

*“One requirement for peace is respect for otherness and for the diversity of life” (Tenzin Gyatso,
the 14th Dalai Lama)*

Democratic societies are open and pluralistic societies. Diverse lifestyles based on different religious, cultural and political views contribute to this openness and ability to adapt to change. Peaceful coexistence can only function on the basis of mutual respect and tolerance. The freedom of individuals to shape their own lives and to forge and retain their identities is an asset worth protecting for the benefit of society as a whole. For this reason, respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms are essential prerequisites for tolerance. Extremist ideologies and value systems that hold human rights in contempt thus endanger not only individuals, specific groups and minorities, but are a threat to social cohesion. The same is true of prejudices, discrimination and racism.

This conference seeks to underscore the significance for modern, democratic societies of being open to diversity and embracing change. Its aim is to show that, taking the prohibition of discrimination against all individuals and unconditional respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as their starting point, governments, civil society organisations, the media, business and the populace have to actively shape social coexistence. This must be an intrinsic part of any response to the current challenges as countries seek to deal with the consequences of displacement and migration, combat the causes of terrorism, determine the position and significance of religions and minorities, and tackle issues of national identity in the light of global challenges.

The opening panel discussion will anchor the **topic within the discourse on human rights and fundamental freedoms**. Human rights and fundamental freedoms are always complementary and mutually reinforcing, even if they can at times conflict, as illustrated by



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freedom of religion and belief and freedom of expression. However, they are the only basis on which intolerance and discrimination can be combated.

Two key aspects are to be examined in the panel discussions: **educational work** advocating greater tolerance and diversity, and **steps to combat online hate speech and discrimination**.

In order to counter intolerance and discrimination, people's attention must constantly be drawn to the foundations of social coexistence, to human rights and to the dangers of racism and hatred. Educational work is thus a part of any efforts to combat racism, xenophobia and intolerance, radicalisation and violence. Education raises people's awareness and acceptance of diversity, cultural differences and individual liberty. The conference will highlight examples of successful educational work and strategies for dealing with and reacting to prejudices as one key aspect of endeavours to combat hate and discrimination. Both public and civil society initiatives will be looked at.

In many countries, political and social discourse is increasingly influenced by hate speech and stereotypes. We have seen a considerable increase in the number of racist, xenophobic and discriminatory comments in social networks and on the Internet. These can be countered by prosecuting those responsible, by launching education campaigns and by providing the relevant counter-arguments. But political actors, civil society and the operators of Internet platforms also have to assume responsibility. While it is vital to safeguard the right to freedom of expression, we also have to publicly and effectively repudiate and counter hate speech and discrimination. Hate speech and discriminatory attitudes lead too often to hate crimes. The discussion will look at the relationship between the right to free expression and the prohibition of discrimination. Particular attention will be devoted to examples of effective measures against hate speech.

Civil society plays an important role in promoting tolerance and diversity. The contribution of civil society actors, especially through education, towards tackling prejudices and hatred as well as through combating hate speech will be the focus of a pre-conference for civil society on Wednesday 19 October. The results of these discussions will be put forward by civil society representatives at the conference on 20 October.

The conference aims to encourage participants to step up their efforts to counter discrimination and intolerance and to promote democracy and diversity. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is the foundation for peaceful social coexistence in our countries and across borders. Reaching unity in diversity is the key challenge facing our societies. The conference urges us to address this challenge.



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PRE-CONFERENCE for CIVIL SOCIETY 19 October 2016

DRAFT PROGRAMME

PRE-CONFERENCE for CIVIL SOCIETY: Wednesday, 19 October 2016

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| 10:00 – 11:00 | Registration and Welcome Coffee Venue: Europafoyer |
| 11:00 – 13:00 | OPENING SESSION Venue: Europasaal |
| 11:00 – 11:30 | Welcome Speech Dr Gernot Erler , Special Representative of the Federal Government for the OSCE Chairmanship in 2016, Federal Foreign Office, Germany |
| 11:30 – 13:00 | DISCUSSION: State and Non-State Actors and Their Role in Combating Discrimination and Intolerance |
| 13:00 – 14:00 | Lunch/ Market of Ideas / Exhibition in Foyer (Projects, Good Practices, Initiatives against Racism, NGO Presentations) |
| 14:00 – 16:30 | GROUP DISCUSSIONS (Development of Recommendations for Conference on Tolerance and Diversity) GROUP I: Education for Tolerance and Diversity GROUP II: Combating Hatred in Social Media – Exploring Interrelations with Freedom of Opinion and Expression GROUP III: Effective Safeguards against Discrimination GROUP IV: Multi-Community – Civil Society Coalitions For Joint Advocacy |
| 16:30 – 17:00 | Coffee Break / Market of Ideas / Exhibition in Foyer |
| 17:00 – 18:00 | CLOSING SESSION |



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OSCE CHAIRMANSHIP CONFERENCE ON TOLERANCE and DIVERSITY

Thursday, 20 October 2016

08:30 – 9:45 Registration and Network Breakfast
Venue: Europafoyer

10:00 – 12:30 **OPENING SESSION**
Venue: Weltsaal

Welcome Speech by Foreign Minister

H.E. Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Germany

PLENARY: Respect for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms as a Basis for Tolerance and Social Cohesion

12:30 – 14:00 Lunch /
Market of Ideas: Exhibition in Foyer

14:00 – 16:30 **PARALLEL PANELS**
PANEL I: Diversity and Tolerance in Education
Venue: Europasaal

PANEL II: Tolerance and Freedom of Speech: Countering Hate Speech and Combating Discrimination on the Internet
Venue: Weltsaal

16:30 – 17:00 Coffe Break

17:00 – 18:30 **CLOSING PLENARY**
Venue: Weltsaal

19:00 – 22:00 **EVENING RECEPTION**
hosted by Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Federal Foreign Minister of Germany

Venue: Zeiss Planetarium (Prenzlauer Allee 80, 10405 Berlin)