

Dear colleagues,

It is my great pleasure to have the opportunity to attend and address this meeting. The Greek delegation fully subscribes to the statement delivered by H.E. Minister Asselborn on behalf of the EU Presidency.

Being convinced that our meeting will produce some **tangible results in fighting anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination, thus making a bold step in promoting tolerance**, I would like to draw your attention to the following points.

What we need to come up with are some **concrete and practical suggestions for measures involving both law enforcement and education**.

We need joint initiatives and clear strong measures to combat discrimination in all its forms, including anti-Semitism. We need the **courage and commitment of political leaders to turn words into action**. We need new coalitions between politicians, intellectuals, journalists, academics, and all other active forces of the civil society in order to overcome hatred, discrimination and exclusion.

Co-ordinated efforts and initiatives aiming at the **eradication** of any form of discrimination, anti-Semitism, intolerance and social exclusion of any kind, should start early in our children's lives in schools, continue at the workplace, and find their way in political, social, economic and cultural life.

Racism and xenophobia, including anti-Semitism, are **direct violations** of the principles of liberty, democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, upon which the OSCE is founded. In particular, all EU Member States, including my country, spare no efforts so that **the European Union remains an exemplary Union of diversity** where individual differences are accepted and perceived as elements enriching our societies.

In the context of our discussions, one should not underestimate that each country has its own special characteristics and historical background that sometimes are bound to determine its behaviour. Nevertheless, we are here today in order to share experiences and establish **better practices in fighting discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race or sexual orientation**, in promoting the recognition of the rights of persons with disabilities as well as equality for all.

Allow me to underline, at this point, that the issue of migration should also be considered in the context of our discussions. The point here should be to explore ways and means in order to strike a **fair balance between the rights and obligations of both incoming migrants and host society**. It would be difficult to deny that integration entails both duties and rights, which should

be based on reciprocal commitments between the host society and the immigrants.

Greece, in its capacity as a Member of all today's major international organisations and the EU in particular, attaches great importance to the fight against racism, xenophobia, and all forms of discrimination. All similar acts are and should always be dealt with severely.

My country's firm objective is to continue its positive contribution in building a Europe of peace and tolerance in the most effective way. A Europe where respect for human rights and human dignity coupled with liberty, democracy and the rule of law will govern the lives of all our fellow citizens.

Racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism are clear violations of all our civilisation stands for. Awareness of the past is crucial if we want to root out any manifestations of intolerance or social exclusion. The very fact that the OSCE family is gathered here today is definitely **another important step** towards the right direction.

Thank you for your kind attention.