



PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

**OSCE CONFERENCE ON COMBATING DISCRIMINATION AND
PROMOTING MUTUAL RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING.
Bucharest 7 and 8 June 2007**

**Statement by Mr. Kåre R. Aas, Director General, Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs.**

**Plenary Session 4: Legislation in the field of tolerance and non-
discrimination: the role of law enforcement in combating hate crimes; data
collection on hate crimes**

Let me first thank our Romanian hosts for organizing this important event and the Spanish Chairmanship for their firm support of the tolerance agenda.

At the outset I would like to stress that Norway has advocated closer cooperation between global and regional organisations and initiatives in the efforts to promote tolerance and dialogue. It is our belief that such closer cooperation is to the benefit of this noble cause.

In addition it is Norway's view that it is important to stress the interdependency of human rights. The right to freedom of religion depends on other rights, including the right to freedom of expression.

Let it be no doubt, it is the responsibility of national authorities to ensure that tolerance and multiculturalism may thrive. We should all pursue a comprehensive public policy that promotes inclusion and participation of all citizens. This is critical for the elimination of intolerance.

Mr. Moderator, as possible examples of good practices, let me mention a few measures that my country has explored.

In April 2005 a bill was approved amending the Penal Code and forming part of Norway's strengthened protection against discrimination on ethnic grounds. The amendments that entered into force on 1 January last year strengthened the penal protection against expressions of racial hatred and discrimination in three main ways.

Firstly, the maximum penalty for violation was increased.

Secondly, gross negligence is now sufficient to satisfy the criterion of guilt.

Thirdly, the scope of the law has been widened. According to the former wording it was required that racist statements or expressions were made in public or otherwise disseminated to the public.

According to the new wording, it is sufficient that such expressions are made in a way that makes them fit for public dissemination. The Penal Code thus applies to statements made on radio or TV, on open Internet-pages or on posters, regardless of whether the statement is actually reaching the public or not.

To further strengthen our national measures, my Government will be submitting a bill later this year where hate motivation is included in the list of circumstances entailing increased penalty.

The Norwegian Government has decided to strengthen our laws on protection against discrimination, and last week the Government appointed an Official Commission to create a new comprehensive and all encompassing law against discrimination.

One final point Mr. Moderator, let me assure you of Norway's continued support in our common efforts to promote tolerance and combat all forms of discrimination.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator