

**1042<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Permanent Council  
5 March 2015**

**Joint Statement on Zero Discrimination Day**

**Delivered on behalf of the following 48 participating States: Albania, Andorra, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, the European Union and its member states: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Norway, San Marino, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United States of America**

Mr. Chairperson,

On March 1, the world welcomed for the second time Zero Discrimination Day, a day to celebrate diversity and recognize that every person counts.

The OSCE decided in Madrid in 2007, to take a comprehensive approach “in order to effectively combat all forms of discrimination.” We jointly celebrate Zero Discrimination Day because we believe that promoting tolerance and ensuring human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, is central to OSCE’s vision of comprehensive security with the inherent dignity of the individual at its core. This principle is firmly enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which proclaims that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

Political leaders must fight discrimination, and must not reinforce it by taking discriminatory action against members of any vulnerable group, or by introducing legislation that creates undue restrictions on the rights of members of such groups to exercise the freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and thought, conscience, religion or belief. We note that some of the gravest and darkest pages of human history occurred when the ideology of hatred was incorporated into political movements.

We reiterate our support for the work of the OSCE, notably through the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, and other Executive Structures, as well as OSCE Chairmanships and their Personal Representatives, to promote tolerance and non-discrimination toward all, foster the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by every person, and oppose hate crimes of any sort, directed against anyone in the OSCE region.

In conclusion, we call upon all participating States of the OSCE to live up to their commitment to combat all forms of discrimination. Let’s not forget that, fundamentally, tolerance is built upon the recognition of the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of all, without exceptions.

Thank you.