Excellences, ladies and gentlemen.

- First of all, let me thank you very much for being invited to speak to you here today on a very pertinent subject, which is close to my heart and is becoming increasingly important and urgent to address: combatting racism, xenophobia and discrimination.

- Before I delve into the matter, let me put this into the context of the OSCE; a security organization whose participating States have stated that lasting security cannot be achieved without respect for human rights and functioning democratic institutions. In order to do so, they have committed themselves to a comprehensive catalogue of human rights and democracy norms.

- My office, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights has been mandated to assist the participating States in living up to these commitments. Before I discuss in which way we address those, let me briefly set the stage and mention some general trends we observe in our work.

- Firstly, and importantly, despite these long-standing commitments, racism, xenophobia and discrimination continue to be a concern across the OSCE region. Discrimination in vital areas, such as employment, education, and housing, remain a reality for many members of different religious, ethnic or other groups.

- Often such practices are institutional and systemic, which makes them more difficult to address and dismantle.

- Some minority communities are disproportionately targeted by security policies that include racial and ethnic profiling. Women are disproportionately targets of multiple discrimination. Additionally, numerous assaults, both physical and verbal, against people of African descent, Roma and Sinti, immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers can be seen across the OSCE region.

- Such manifestations of intolerance threaten both the security of individuals and societal cohesion. Discrimination and intolerant discourse often escalate into violence and wider scale conflict.
I also note the merging of anti-migrant feeling with racism directed at a range of minority groups, accompanied by hate crimes that are intersectional nature; in other words, are motivated by bias against more than one aspects of a person’s identity such as gender, race and religion.

We also note that increasingly technically sophisticated tools, media literacy and education are needed to understand, analyze and address hate crimes, intolerant discourse on line, and racism, xenophobia and discrimination.

Now, let me turn to what my office does to address racism, xenophobia and discrimination in our work:

ODIHR collects data on hate crime from governmental, civil society and non-governmental sources, and issues an annual hate crime report.

Our hate crime data indicates that violent acts against particular groups and communities continue to be a concern in the OSCE region: 2,154 racist or xenophobic incidents were reported to ODIHR for 2016.

ODIHR works with national authorities to improve their systems for recording and collection of data on hate crimes, as this is an area where many countries face serious challenges.

We also provide capacity building programs for police and prosecutors by offering training on hate crimes tailored to the needs, laws and language of a country.

We pair these programs with our work with civil society organizations to build their capacity to monitor hate crimes, including specialized training, as well as developing joint monitoring networks which include government bodies, civil society and other intergovernmental organizations.

ODIHR also actively initiates and supports coalition building among civil society. We know that stronger connections are needed between different groups to build capacity and increase effectiveness of civil society to adequately address racism, xenophobia and discrimination.

To this end, ODIHR has prepared a coalition-building manual to help create successful and sustainable coalitions to work together to address all types of intolerance and discrimination. The manual to be launched this month, will be a very useful and practical tool that could very well be used beyond the OSCE region.
• ODIHR is also working on specialized community security guides. These guides are designed to help governments take stock of security risks and needs, with the goal of improving the capacity of law-enforcement officials and institutions to address the security needs of particular communities.

• For instance, we published a practical guide on understanding anti-Semitic hate crimes and addressing the security needs of Jewish communities; and a security guide for Muslim communities is currently in development.

• Our educational guidelines are meant to support educators in countering intolerance and discrimination against particular communities. They are intended for a wide audience, including education policymakers and officials, teacher trainers, teachers, principals and head teachers, staff in teacher unions and professional associations, and members of civil society organizations.

• We also use OSCE’s human dimension meetings to discuss racism, xenophobia and discrimination, including the yearly Human Dimension Implementation Meeting which is held in September.

• ODIHR has also convened a number of events and consultations on racism and xenophobia against people of African descent, including with a focus on the situation of women.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I also want to use the opportunity to mention our work on integration of migrants, which is aimed at helping states counter discrimination against migrant workers.

• We give support to participating States upon request with advice on strengthening national migrant integration policies, implemented through tailored consultation and advice.

• We support policy assessment of migrant integration, usually through facilitation of national assessments of the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), which identify areas for improvement.

• ODIHR also conducts policy work to identify emerging challenges or areas of need.

• This does first and foremost involve the generation and dissemination of knowledge through research and publication of policy studies as well as the facilitation of policy roundtables to exchange good practices on responses to challenges and needs among participating States.
• On request, we conduct capacity building for participating States’ national authorities responsible for migrant integration, and civil society organizations. ODIHR has seen a significant increase in the number of requests for capacity building from participating States, and in response to this demand a new training manual on migrant integration will be launched this year, including a dedicated module on addressing racism, xenophobia and discrimination against migrants.

What can be done further?

• ODIHR is well-placed to help participating States address these issues, bringing both longstanding experience of migrant integration work and its established expertise on addressing hate crime, intolerance and discrimination.

• We will continue to offer tailored support to a range of actors, both institutions and civil society and we remain at the disposal of OSCE participating States and other actors in supporting the implementation of their commitments to counter racism, xenophobia and discrimination.

• As for what States can do, authorities and policy makers must place more emphasis on building inclusive societies by promoting tolerance and non-discrimination.

• They must counter racism, xenophobia and discrimination, as well as hate crime, through education, reporting, awareness-raising and adequate capacity building.

• This includes supporting counter narratives of inclusion, tolerance and democratic values. This means to engage the voices of the often “silent majority,” promoting responsible leadership and making a point of addressing intolerant political rhetoric.

• Also strengthening law enforcement and justice responses to hate crime and ensuring that all of this is properly resourced.

• My final point is that we should never forget that the costs of prevention will always be less than the costs of serious social violence and the damage to life, property and community relations.

• Thank you very much. I look forward to our discussions.
Potential Q&A points

**How to find solutions for a long-term integration of migrants into European society?**

- In order to effectively respond to new and expanded needs on migrant integration, the OSCE participating States need to strengthen existing policies and further build capacities in the area.

- Both non-governmental and governmental actors need to be involved in this process, with their different roles and contributions, and the valuable role of civil society, in particular, should be explored and promoted.

- Tailored approaches to migrant integration are needed, and the specific needs of different groups of migrants should be accommodated in order to make the integration of migrant successful.

- Continued, positive communication and information exchange between the countries of origin and destination is needed.

**How to efficiently fight any form of xenophobia and discrimination based on national/ethnic/cultural origin?**

- Authorities and policy makers of the OSCE participating States must place more emphasis on promoting and building inclusive societies.

- They should also counter racism, xenophobia and discrimination, as well as hate crime, through education, reporting, awareness-raising and adequate capacity building.

- Continue to fund and draw on research to guide responses – studying the dynamics between cause and effect and to move towards prediction, and hopefully prevention; continue to support research so its conclusions can inform policy- and decision-makers.

- Support counter narratives of inclusion, tolerance and democratic values: engage the voices of the often “silent majority,” both online and offline, invest in building critical thinking and digital literacy, and increasing fact-checking skills and resources available to all.

- Promote responsible leadership and address intolerant political rhetoric, which is clearly linked to increases in anti-migrant or racist hate incidents, and promote new, evidence-based narratives.
• Strengthen law enforcement and justice responses to hate crime; ensure the police force and justice chain actors reflect the communities they serve in their diversity.

• Ensure efforts to counter racism, xenophobia and discrimination are properly resourced, and these resources can range from research and statistical analysis, to specialized training for law enforcement and justice professionals, to support for community initiatives to facilitate reporting and support victims, and to advocacy promoting fact-based narratives to counter prejudice and myths.

• Build coalitions and partnerships, particularly among affected communities, and seek feedback and policy inputs from a range of actors, including communities; good examples include policy review directly informed by community engagement.

• Recognize that the costs of prevention will invariably be less than the costs of serious social violence and the damage to life, property and community relations that can result from hate-motivated speech and incidents.