

Permanent Mission of Austria

Madam Chair,

First of all, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as the Chair of the Forum. [?] of the Resolution of Minority Issues and the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly, Austria has been particularly looking forward to discussing this important issue.

Around the world, we are witnessing a disturbing rise of xenophobia, racism and intolerance. The vast majority of information, hate speech, including even instigation of violence are generated online. We must act more decisively against this misuse of social media for spreading hatred and inciting violence. In Austria, the fight against online hate speech is an essential part of our government programme. The legislative proposal is currently being prepared and it's in the phase of public consultation. Its' aim is to place more responsibility on social media providers; to monitor the quickly raised hateful content. It will extend the application of the criminal offence incitement to hatred, also to individuals, and it will reduce the legal costs of lawsuits, a burdening practice that has often kept victims of online hate speech from going to court to defend themselves. Our clear objective is to better protect victims of online hate speech and hate crimes, and to strengthen measures against cyberbullying. However, new laws are necessary but not sufficient. Non-legislative measures are equally essential in supporting social cohesion, integration and understanding. We've implemented awareness raising campaigns in Austria, including the Council of Europe's initiative "no hate speech". The Centre [?] against online hate, offers free counselling for victims and witnesses of online hate and has developed a nationwide strategy for the prevention and countering of violent extremism and radicalization that contains a number of concrete measures to address phenomena leading to violence within our society.

Madame Chair, before closing, we would like to offer the following recommendation:

- States should ensure that victims of hate speech are aware of their rights that [?] and are able to exercise them.

Thank you very much for your attention.