



**INTERVENTION OF
THE DELEGATION OF THE HOLY SEE
AT THE OSCE CHAIRMANSHIP CONFERENCE
ON INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION
AGAINST MUSLIMS
Cordoba, 10 October 2007**

Fourth Plenary Session
“Educating to overcome Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims”

Mr. Chairman,

1. In the framework of the OSCE’s fight against intolerance and discrimination of Muslims, the role of education as a “good practice to be promoted” is of vital importance.

Education offers a unique opportunity to present - especially to the young – certain major values such as the unity of the human race, the equal dignity of all human beings, and the solidarity which binds together all the members of the human family. Accordingly, there is a continuous need to monitor, and to correct if necessary, the presentations made in text-books used in schools. This is valid especially for references to historical facts: easy stereotyping must be avoided and space should be given to serious scientific methodology and academic research.

The question is not merely to uproot all possible remains of diffidence towards cultures that are different from the one in which one has grown up, but rather to arouse, through educational work, a culture of deep respect for the innate and inalienable dignity of each and every person and, consequently, for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and equally a culture of deep awareness of fundamental duties towards others. It is obvious that these efforts will be successful if all cultures will endeavour to build up their respective values on a ground which is shared by all men and women and therefore is

respectful of their common nature. In effect, when human nature is violated, the truth about man is subverted and therefore human rights are compromised, leading inevitably to forms of intolerance and discrimination.

2. In this spirit it is likewise important that Western societies avoid the risk of promoting an education which, on the one hand, in the name of a wrong conception of the lay character of the State tends to relativise its own patrimony, imbued with a cultural and religious dimension, and which, on the other hand, in consideration of multiculturalism, contradicts the aforementioned conception of the State, integrating in an acritical fashion the specific contributions of other religions and minority cultures. This would affect the religious, cultural and juridical patrimony of States and would contribute to social tensions.

3. In the context of education, religious communities play a very meaningful role. The President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, wrote in his Message for the End of Ramadan 'Id-Al-Fitr 1428 H. / 2007 A.D.: *“As religious believers, it's up to us all to be educators of peace, of human rights, of a freedom which respects each person, but also to ensure increasingly strong social bonds, because man must take care of his human brothers and sisters without discrimination. We are particularly responsible for ensuring that our young people, who will be in charge of tomorrow's world, are formed in this spirit.*

In this area, it is clear for all to see just how important are the formation of believers and preaching within each religious tradition: every religion, in each religious event, and through every religious representative, needs to become a promoter, not of a hateful violent opposition, but of solidarity, fraternity and peace.

4. In the context of education, I also wish to stress that the Catholic Church has, for centuries and in every continent, played a very active role “on the ground”.

Faithful to the values she cherishes, she carries out her educative mission in the service of every person and of the whole person. In many countries where the majority of the population is non-Christian, Catholic schools are places where children and young people of different religions, cultures, social classes or ethnic backgrounds come into contact with one another and are educated together. This is true also of certain areas of countries with a Christian majority, but including substantial presence of other religious communities.

5. The Catholic Church is also convinced that interreligious dialogue contributes in an important way to education in respect. In fact

interreligious dialogue may help to dispel misunderstandings and to prevent the shameless exploitation of religion by some terrorist networks in an attempt to justify their threats against global security. Cardinal Tauran concludes the above-mentioned letter with the words: “...*all forces must be mobilised in the service of mankind and humanity so that younger generations do not become cultural or religious blocs opposed to each other, but genuine brothers and sisters in humanity...Education and example will also be a source of hope in the future for them.*”.

Mr. Chairman,

It is my Delegation’s sincere wish that all of us go forth from Cordoba ever more committed to be witnesses and educators of truth, peace and authentic freedom! Thank you.