



THE HOLY SEE
2015 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Working Session 14: Tolerance and non-discrimination II:
Combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination,
also focusing on intolerance on religious grounds
Wednesday, September 30, 2015

Mr. Moderator,

For almost fifty years, dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Jewish community has made steady progress in a systematic way. Growing anti-Semitic trends in Europe as well as acts of hatred, violence and even the killing of innocent lives, are troubling. Recently we marked the seventieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the concentration camp which has come to be regarded as synonymous with the great tragedy of the *Shoah*. The memory of what took place there, in the heart of Europe, is a warning to present and future generations. It must never happen again anywhere, against anyone.

Mr. Moderator,

With regards to intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, my Delegation wishes to reiterate its appreciation for the work of the OSCE and its institutions, as well as the CiO personal Representative, in fighting intolerance and discrimination against Muslims. The commitment of the OSCE has been effective in raising awareness regarding the serious problem of such intolerance and incidents perpetrated against Muslims, their property and places of worship. We also commend the efforts of all those individuals or institutions, religious or civil, who in their own way contribute to the peaceful coexistence of various cultures and religions in our common OSCE region.

The Delegation of the Holy See is hopeful that, with increased common efforts from all sides, intolerance and discrimination against Muslims and other religious communities in the OSCE region will diminish and eventually disappear from a community that will pursue the common good of all its members.

Mr. Moderator,

With this lamentable increase of religious intolerance, it is well documented that Christians remain, year in, year out, the religious group most persecuted and discriminated against worldwide, as was also underlined during the *Conference on enhancing the efforts to prevent and combat intolerance and discrimination against Christians, focusing on hate crimes, exclusion, marginalisation and denial of rights* held last May in Vienna. During the

same event it was also affirmed that the number of violent incidents, hate crimes and intolerance against Christians in the OSCE region in recent years has increased. This is a deeply worrying sign. Even more disturbing is the lack of a proper response from the civil authorities, political leaders, social officials and media towards such acts. In fact, they are often tolerated and even at times defended under the guise of art, satire or freedom of expression. Incidents targeting Christians remain underreported and the serious investigation of such incidents is even rarer.

Therefore, we call upon the OSCE participating States, in particular, and the international community in general, as well as the media and other relevant role-players to combat intolerance and discrimination, as well as hate incidents and crimes against Christians, with the same determination as they would fight hatred against members of other religious communities.

Tolerance toward one view can never lead to intolerance towards others. Intolerance in the name of “tolerance” must be named for what it is and publically condemned. To deny religiously informed moral discourse its place in the public square is fundamentally intolerant and anti-democratic.

It is not necessary to be a Christian to recognize the growing intolerance, discrimination and hate crimes against Christians. Nevertheless, prevailing inaction highlights the urgent need for further raising awareness in society in general, and in the police and government representatives in particular. The OSCE and especially ODIHR could play an important role in this endeavour. Educational materials on countering and raising awareness of this negative phenomenon, as in the case of anti-Semitism and discrimination and intolerance against Muslims, should be urgently developed and widely circulated. This should be seen not only as a necessity, but also as the just thing to do. It would certainly elevate and enrich the profile of the OSCE/ODIHR.

My Delegation would also like to reiterate its call, and will continue doing so, to institute an International Day against Discrimination of Christians together with the OSCE, and in particular ODIHR, as the chief promoters of such an initiative.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.