



THE HOLY SEE
2016 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Working Session 11: Tolerance and non-discrimination I – prevention and responds to hate crime, and combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination, also focusing on intolerance on religious grounds

Monday, 26 September 2016

Mme Moderator,

The inherent dignity of every human person is the basis for universal human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Since the Dipoli consultations in 1973, the Holy See has always insisted – and continues to insist – on the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion, as an essential factor for peace, justice and welfare, necessary to ensure the development of friendly relations and cooperation between the participating States. Its participation in the OSCE and active presence and engagement in the human dimension are expressions of the Holy See's continued desire to affirm and defend the dignity of every human person.

Therefore, the Holy See deplores hate crimes, acts of intolerance, discrimination and violence against any human person, and has repeatedly and decisively condemned violence against people and every sign of unjust discrimination. Our Delegation notes with profound concern, and deplores, that in the entire OSCE area – both East and West of Vienna – many persons and communities continue to be subject to threats or acts of hostility or violence as a result of their racial, ethnic or religious identity, or victims of other acts of intolerance and discrimination. Specific issues of serious concern are the hate crimes and incidents perpetrated against places of worship and other religious properties in the whole OSCE area, and the inequality and discrimination suffered by women.

The Catholic Church, at every moment of history and in an ever new way, is always being challenged by the message of love that the Founder, Jesus Christ, left her. It is a love that sees only the man and the woman in need, and it does not allow itself to be disturbed by other considerations. Such was the attitude of the Good Samaritan in the Gospel: he brought help to the wounded stranger, abandoned at the side of the road and ignored by passers-by.

Acts of intolerance and discrimination pose a threat to the social cohesion of and within the participating States, affecting not only the victim, but also the wider community. However, not all acts of discrimination pose a direct threat to the stability in the international community or are likely to trigger violence and conflict on a wider-scale, putting in danger the peaceful relations among the States.

The participating States consciously and correctly agreed by consensus to limit the OSCE's specific interest in the area of tolerance and non-discrimination to those phenomena that could threaten the security and stability of the Region.¹ The reason for this limited scope of the OSCE's interest was not to ignore some groups, but rather reflects the Organization decision to address in common the phenomena that might erode confidence between States and trigger violence and conflict on a wider-scale, putting in danger the peaceful relations among the States.

Therefore, the Holy See remains confident that, in accordance with its nature as a security organization, the OSCE, while condemning all acts of hate crime will develop a specific response to those phenomena that can undermine the peace and stability of the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian Region, remaining within the realm of the commitments consensually agreed upon by the Participating States. Undue attention to other concerns, even if legitimate, serves only to distract the efforts of the OSCE, as well as to forestall effective and timely measures to address the original commitments, many of which have yet to be implemented.

And finally, in referring to tolerance and non-discrimination, and also focusing on intolerance on religious grounds, the Holy See would like to stress yet again that in accordance with the indivisibility, interdependence and interrelation of human rights, the commitments on tolerance and non-discrimination cannot be separated from longstanding commitments to freedom of religion and belief. The implementation of the first requires that the latter should also be fully implemented: tolerance, in fact, cannot be an *alibi* for denying or not guaranteeing religious freedom. On the other hand, tolerance and non-discrimination cannot be used or interpreted in a way that would restrict the freedom of religion or belief or other fundamental freedoms.

The Holy See remains confident that in Hamburg it will be possible to reach consensus on the *Ministerial Council Declarations on enhancing efforts to combat intolerance and discrimination, including against Muslims, Christians and members of other religions*, in accordance to the task given by the *Basel Declaration on enhancing efforts to combat anti-Semitism*. It is important to remember that we are not here talking about new projects, but rather the completion of a task all 57 participating States have already agreed to undertake.

Thank you, Mme Moderator.

¹ Cfr. US Delegation to the OSCE, HDIM 2008, Session 10 (6 October 2008), HDIM.DEL/346/08.