



Associazione culturale “**Giuseppe Dossetti: i Valori**”
TUTELA E SVILUPPO DEI DIRITTI

Osservatorio per la Tolleranza e la Libertà Religiosa
Observatory for Religious Tolerance and Freedom

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OSCE High-Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination
Tirana, 21-22 May 2013

Session 1: Combating intolerance and discrimination against any person, including racism, xenophobia and aggressive nationalism, in accordance with the existing OSCE commitments

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From Vancouver to Vladivostok no part of the OSCE area is immune from manifestations of intolerance and discrimination. Many persons and groups are subject to threats or acts of discrimination, hostility or violence as a result of their racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity. The ongoing global economic crisis is fuelling new forms of intolerance and discrimination on the ground of property or social origin: in the current situation the weakest and poorest people in our societies are often the first victims. Moreover, during recent OSCE meetings it was highlighted that persons with disabilities too often suffer violations of their rights.

Such episodes threaten the social cohesion inside each participating State, seriously affecting the group that is the victim. But some of them can also erode the confidence between States and trigger violence and conflict on a wider-scale. Therefore, in accordance with its feature as a security organization and with its comprehensive and indivisible approach to security, the OSCE must develop a specific response to those phenomena of intolerance and discrimination that are able to undermine peace and stability of the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region.

As it was recognized by the Ministerial Council Decision No. 9/09, these episodes affect both minority and majority communities. In this respect it should be noted that a hierarchical approach – implying that acts against majority groups are less serious than those against minorities – would be improper: in both cases the inherent dignity of the human person is equally violated.

In promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelation of human dimension commitments should be also bear in mind. Commitments on preventing and



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combating religious intolerance and discrimination cannot be considered apart from the longstanding commitments on freedom of religion or belief: the implementation of religious tolerance and non-discrimination go hand in hand with the respect for religious freedom. If one of them lacks, the other one cannot be fully achieved and vice versa.

On the other hand, tolerance and non-discrimination commitments cannot be used or interpreted in a way that could restrict freedom of religion or belief. At this regard let me note that certain anti-discrimination legislations adopted by participating States seem to be in contrast with the very concept of religious freedom provided by the OSCE commitments because they do not take into serious account the autonomy of the religious communities, preventing the latter to organize themselves and to act in accordance with their beliefs and interests. In the same way, hate speech legislations should not unduly affect freedom of expression: the prevention of intolerant discourse cannot result in establishing a right to be free from criticism or all adverse comment. On the other hand, freedom of expression should be exercised responsibly.

Despite many commitments adopted in the field of tolerance and non-discrimination and appreciable efforts of the ODIHR as well as of the three Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office, much work is still to be done. But I am confident that this High-Level Conference will contribute to better understanding of new challenges and lead to appropriate responses.

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