

**STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY  
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SECRETARY FOR THE HOLY SEE'S RELATIONS WITH STATES,  
AT THE 17<sup>TH</sup> MINISTERIAL COUNCIL OF THE  
ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE  
ATHENS, DECEMBER 1 AND 2, 2009**

Mister Chairman!

1. *Introduction.* Thank you for your invitation to come to Greece for the Seventeenth Ministerial Council of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and to reflect on questions pertaining to European security in the twenty-first century.

It is natural that we do this in Greece, for we must recognize the great debt which we all owe to your country; in fact no one can be unaware of the enduring influence that her unique history and culture have had on European civilization and indeed on that of the entire world. On a personal note, I am especially grateful to come in the footsteps of Saint Paul, whose memory is etched for ever in the soil of Greece. It was here in Athens that Paul founded one of the first communities of his voyages in the West and of his mission on the European continent. And it was in Greece that there began the dialogue between the Christian message and Hellenistic culture, a dialogue which would decisively contribute to the Christian roots of European civilization.

“The Trojans held their watch that night but not the Achaeans [whose] hearts were torn inside their chests” (The *Illiad*, Book IX, 1;9). In recent times, there has been a growing recognition that our hearts are also torn within our chests, especially as we face the emergence of many threats in the OSCE and the erosion of confidence among participating States. It is precisely a recognition of these realities that led to putting into motion the Corfu Process and the reflections of the past six months on questions pertaining to security from Vancouver to Vladivostok in the twenty-first century. The Holy See appreciates the opportunity given to treat these questions in a systematic way and commends the Greek Chairmanship for its efforts in this regard.

In September of this year, the human family somberly marked the 70th anniversary of the start of World War II, underlining the need to remember the bloodiest conflict in the 20th century so as not to repeat it. On that occasion, Pope Benedict XVI said: "The memory of these events impels us to pray for the victims and for the people who still bear the wounds in their body and heart; may it also be a warning to all never to repeat such barbarities and, in our time still marked by

conflicts and opposition, to redouble efforts to build lasting peace, passing on especially to the new generations, a culture and lifestyle marked by love, solidarity and esteem for the other." The Pope also stresses that religion should promote peace and fight racism and totalitarianism. "The contribution that religion can and must make is particularly important in promoting forgiveness and reconciliation against violence, racism, totalitarianism, and extremism, which defile the image of the Creator in man," he said.<sup>1</sup>

I mention these remarks by Pope Benedict because they resonate so well within the framework of the OSCE commitments. The quest for security and cooperation in Europe is an ongoing and challenging endeavour; one that, given ever-changing political, economic, and cultural trends, must be based upon unchanging, authentic values and principles that will ensure the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms no matter what challenges we face. The *Analytical Concept Paper on the Programme of the Greek Chairmanship 2009* expressed this point well: "The OSCE can and should live up to its full potential, serving as a pivot of stability for intra-state and inter-state relations, and a place where all of Europe's security actors can come together to work toward a brighter future."

**2. Politico-Military Dimension.** Regarding the politico-military dimension of the OSCE, my Delegation wishes to associate itself with those who, during the Corfu Process discussions, look with concern at the numerous hot-spots of crisis in the OSCE region that give rise to instability and insecurity.

Unfortunately, one must admit that the OSCE, despite its impressive toolbox, has not always succeeded in averting these crises. It is for this reason that the Holy See lauds the initiatives of the Greek Chairmanship – to which go our full support – intended to strengthen the functioning of this toolbox, as well as to strengthen the mechanisms available for conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation. We welcome and appreciate the on-going Corfu Process and hope that it will be continued in a constructive manner in order to renew and to improve the effectiveness of the OSCE.

In particular, the principles contained in the 1993 Document on "Stabilizing Measures for Localized Crisis Situations", as well as in the various documents on "risk reduction" are certainly still valid. It is time to return to trust in and recourse to the rich diplomatic instruments that are available.

A contribution worthy of note in this direction is offered by the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC), especially in the context of the Dialogue on Security, where problematic areas are debated without reticence.

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict XVI, *Message for the Angelus* (Viterbo), 6 September 2009.

The Forum is the custodian of important acquisitions in the field of arms control and of confidence and security building measures which, if applied without reservation and in good faith – something which has not always happened – are a powerful instrument in ensuring stability and security.

In this regard, the Holy See is aware that there are numerous initiatives underway in many participating States intended to render these instruments more effective and better suited to developments of threats to stability and security. We hope that these initiatives will bear fruit.

The Decision on the activities of the Forum presented to the Ministerial Council for approval contains a detailed list of the fields of action to which attention should be dedicated. It is a further stroke of good luck that Greece will assume the Presidency of the Forum for Security in the first part of next year.

**3. *Protracted conflicts.*** Unfortunately, forgotten wars and protracted hostilities continue to cause deaths and injuries, often amid silence and neglect on the part of considerable sectors of public opinion. Protracted or frozen conflicts only lead to protracted suffering on the part of civilians, especially when conflict is prolonged with economic sanctions; or when military targets are exhausted or inaccessible to air power. In short, limited means applied over an extended period will often produce disastrous consequences at the same time that they yield limited results and promise conflict with no foreseeable end.

Future action of the OSCE must necessarily involve a serious engagement to resolve protracted conflicts. There are some weak, yet positive, signs coming from some of the areas of these protracted conflicts. In the opinion of the Holy See, the OSCE is well placed to invite the protagonists of these conflicts to engage in dialogue, to follow the path of negotiation, and to weigh the proportions between the remedies aimed at eliminating a wrong and the negative humanitarian consequences.

There will be no peace on earth while the oppression of peoples, injustices and economic imbalances, which still exist, endure. But for the desired structural changes to take place, external initiatives and interventions are not enough; what is needed above all is a joint conversion to peace – peace founded on the solid pillars of love and justice, truth and freedom.

**4. *Economic and Environmental Dimension.*** The discussions in the Corfu Process revealed the centrality of the topic of migration on the OSCE agenda for years to come. Migrants are now a felt priority by the international community. The diversity of population movements around the world has increasingly caught the attention of international organizations and States: temporary and permanent migrant workers, refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, trafficked women, men and children, as well as multinational corporations transferred personnel. New

categories emerge like internal and cross-borders' displaced people forced to move by the degradation of the environment, certain types of development projects and perhaps even consequences of climate change. Estimates now give more than two hundred million persons in the world living and working in countries different than the one in which they were born or were citizens; there are ninety million workers among them. To all of this add the influence of the current global financial and economic collapse and there emerge obvious connections between migration policies and security.

There are, however, two important topics in contemporary migration that are not adequately discussed and paid attention to in the formulation of policies: the victims of migration flows and the priority that persons have over the economy. The whole system of protection and of human rights cannot be relegated to a secondary supporting role; instead, it must serve, as intended, to give assurances that the dignity of all human persons must take precedence.

Present political trends appear clear and slanted in the direction of responding to the more emotional and vocal demands of public opinion for control and integration. But the pragmatic advantages accepted through the admission of migrants are frequently overshadowed by an ambivalent attitude in the media and public opinion that allow for stereotyping and negative generalizations of newcomers. In the long term, fairness in recognizing the contribution of migrants will only come from a comprehensive approach that embraces all policy components, namely, the rights of the State and of the receiving community, of the migrants and their families, and of the international common good.

In this context, there is a growing consensus on the importance of such an inclusive approach and the necessity to pay more attention to migrants themselves and not only to their economic role as temporary workforce or permanent settlers. In this context, family reunification must be a primary consideration. The family plays a fundamental role in the integration process, in giving stability to the presence of the immigrants in the new social environment, and even in the dynamics of temporary migration. The Catholic Church, in fact all religious traditions, views migrants as human beings in the first place, and then as citizens or guests, or as economic or cultural agents, who bring enrichment to our societies.

Finally, education can play an important role. Migrants, aware of their rights, can be more secure in offering their services and talents and the receiving community, well-informed and respectful of these rights, will feel freer in extending its solidarity in order to build together a common future.

**5. *Human Dimension.*** The discussions in the framework of the Corfu Process have stressed that contained in the *acquis* that the OSCE has carved out for itself over the years are impressive commitments in favour of the defense of fundamental

freedoms and human rights, the right to integral human development, and support for international law and global institutions. It is the dignity of the human person that motivates the desire of our Organization to work for the effective realization of all human rights.

Among these fundamental freedoms is the right to freedom of religion. The right to religious freedom, despite being repeatedly proclaimed by the international community, as well as in the constitutions of most States, continues to be widely violated today. There is, unfortunately, no religion on the planet that is free from discrimination. Acts of intolerance, and violations of religious freedom, continue to be perpetrated in many forms. In fact, more and more cases are brought to the attention of the courts or international human rights bodies.

With the increase of religious intolerance in the world, it is well documented that Christians are the religious group most discriminated against as there well may be more than two hundred million of them, of different confessions, who are in situations of difficulty because of legal and cultural structures that lead to their discrimination.

Pope Benedict XVI lamented this situation, saying: “Speaking of Christians in particular, I must point out with pain that not only are they at times prevented from publicly and freely professing their religious convictions; in some States they are actually persecuted, and even recently tragic cases of ferocious violence have been recorded. The Round Table Meeting on the theme *Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians*, held in Vienna in March 2009, was a successful and hopeful event, and revealed the possibility of constructive dialogue toward mutual understanding and respect among Christians, members of other religions, and non-believers. It is hoped that a follow-up to the Round Table will be forthcoming.

My Delegation wishes to recall the Bucharest Decision of 2001 on Combating Terrorism in which the participating States “firmly reject identification of terrorism with religion.” Indeed, religious communities should not be regarded as the source of social or cultural conflicts, but as an important factor of promoting peace, mutual understanding and common human values.

**6. Conclusion.** At the end of his journey, Odysseus arrives at home but becomes involved in one more battle. However, in a crucial moment, Athena cries out: “Hold back, you men of Ithaca, back from brutal war! Break off – shed no more blood – make peace at once! Call a halt to the great leveler – war.” What did Odysseus do? “He obeyed her, glad at heart. And Athena handed down her pacts of peace between both sides for all the years to come” (*The Odyssey*, Book XXIV, 584-585; 598-600).

The Holy See is convinced of the validity of the ideal embodied in the Helsinki Final Act nearly thirty-five years ago. As the discussions in the framework of the Corfu Process continue next year, under the leadership of the in-coming Kazakh Chairmanship – to whom we pledge our support – it is also my wish that the prophetic Helsinki Final Act will help to ensure peace not only in time for all the years to come, but also geographically “from Vancouver to Vladivostok.”

Thank you, Mister Chairman!