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**HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING - Warsaw,
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**Working session 11: Freedom of thought, conscience, religion or
belief**

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALBERTO LÓPEZ-NAVARRO
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While right now in most OSCE participant states there are no undue restrictions to the activity of religious confessions, and religious freedom is, generally speaking, respected, we perceive a worrying trend on the side of large media corporations in the sense of and the launching of false accusations against religious groups, Christians in particular. Not only the mocking of christian beliefs is becoming commonplace for some media groups, but also a negative view on christian believers and specially in Spain, the Catholic Church, is being insistently propagated.

These widely spread negative stereotypes have a deciding influence in how the society as a whole perceives a given religious community, and it's slowly translating into attacks -verbal and even physical- to Christians.

As it was noted in this morning's session, in some cases there might be an apparent conflict between freedom of speech and freedom of religion. However, we believe there is a clear line between what is a legitimate critique and an offending act under the law of most OSCE countries.

We are not advocating limiting freedom of expression or more regulation of media enterprises – just that the rule of law applies the same way in case of offences against christian beliefs as when the offended is any other social group, and that public authorities don't remain passive upon these attacks.

References:

<http://www.hazteoir.org/alerta/46418-quien-ataca-tu-libertad-expresion>

Recommendations:

- For OSCE to call upon media groups to show respect for religious beliefs (Christians in particular, as they are the preferred target of offensive contents) and take responsibility in maintaining an open, tolerant and free society.
- Raise awareness that the mocking of Christians and Christianity, the negative stereotyping by the media as well as the ridiculisation of Christians and Christian positions could possibly lead to hate crimes.
- To use all available OSCE means to work against intolerance against Christians, inter alia by encouraging the media not to spread prejudices against Christians, and by working more closely with representatives of Christian churches.