

HOLY SEE

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Working Session 14

Tolerance and Non-Discrimination of National Minorities

Mr. Chairman,

The Holy See appreciates the positive contribution of the OSCE and its affiliate organizations and institutions in the fight against intolerance and discrimination. Clearly, to develop institutional arrangements and mechanism to combat economic, social, and political exclusion and discrimination, it is first necessary to recognize the value of the number and quality of aspects that shape human life, people, cultures, societies and institutions.

Moreover, public and political dimensions of development require that the human person be recognized as the center of development. The public dimension stems from the social character of human nature and a recognition that a complex network of relations form to produce common life among human beings. This is the space of citizenship—the place where the essential dimension of a complete human being that allows him or her to be called a citizen is developed. It is therefore linked to the theme of the common good, one of the key themes in Catholic social teaching.

Throughout this OSCE Human Implementation Meeting we have been discussing democracy as a way to take public decisions through the participation of all concerned in dialogue and negotiation. Among the conditions for this dialogue are: (1) the recognition of every person, all peoples, and all cultures as social actors invited to take part in the process of taking decisions: (2) the recovery of the value of dialogue through which persons and peoples commit themselves. The renunciation of violence and force makes the human word the privileged instrument of political action. It must, therefore, be a word that commits whoever pronounces it, as it is capable of creating a change in initial positions and new perspectives of mutual trust, respect, and understanding.

It must be made clear that justice is seriously violated by whatever is done to limit the strength and numerical increase of minorities. It is especially in keeping with the principles of justice that effective measures be taken by the civil authorities to improve the lot of citizens of minority groups, particularly when that betterment concerns their language, the development of their natural gifts, their ancestral customs, and their accomplishments and endeavors in the economic order.

The social “bottom line” includes respect for human dignity and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms that flow from it. Universal human dignity also demands that each person support the fundamental rights and freedoms of every other person. This notion must include a renewed and enhanced consciousness of national minorities.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman