

## **APPEAL**

### **Of the Conference on Freedom of Belief**

**held in**

**Kyrgyzstan, Jalal-Abad, February 15-16, 2002**

#### **We, the participants of the Conference on Freedom of Belief and Expression,**

1. While acknowledging that it is important to find ways to struggle with terrorism, including violence motivated by religion, affirm that ability to express one's religious beliefs freely is a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of democratic society, and, therefore, it is a prerequisite for lasting stability;
2. Taking into account that the principles of freedom of belief are guaranteed in many international declarations and commitments including Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which provides:
  - a. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, *either individually or in community with others and in public or private*;
  - b. No one can be subject to coercion which would *impair* his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.
  - c. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations *prescribed by law and necessary* to protect public safety, order, health and morals as well as the fundamental rights and freedoms of other citizens."
3. Reaffirm commitments on expression in relation to Freedom of Religion, as outlined in the Vienna 1989 Concluding Document:
  - a. Respect the right of individual believers and communities of believers to acquire, possess, and use sacred books, religious publications in the language of their choice;
  - b. Allow religious faiths, institutions and organizations to produce, import and disseminate religious publications and materials;
  - c. Favourably consider the interest of religious communities to participate in public dialogue, including through the mass media.

**Consider that,**

4. Freedom of belief should be guaranteed by appropriate legislative and legal bases and be based upon the principle of tolerance, which should be respected by all agencies as well as by governmental and non-governmental including religious organizations and all citizens.
5. a. OSCE participating states should "take effective measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination against individuals or communities on the grounds of religion or belief in the recognition, exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in all fields of civil, political, economic, social and cultural life, and to ensure the effective equality between believers and non-believers." (Vienna 1989, 16.1)  
  
b. **And** "grant upon their request to communities of believers, practising or prepared to practise their faith within the constitutional framework of their States, recognition of the status provided for them in their respective countries" (Vienna 1989, 16.3);
6. Tolerance is a fundamental principle of all diverse democratic societies. As outlined in the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-eighth session in Paris on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November in 1995,  
  
"Tolerance is a respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's culture, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is a harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty, it is also a political and legal duty. Tolerance is the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace." (Article 1.1).

### **Appeal for**

7. States to ensure that, in their efforts to prevent dangerous actions and groups, that they do not infringe on the rights of people to hold religious or non-religious beliefs. Any state action that limits the manifestations of religion or belief must comply fully with OSCE standards, particularly as set forth in the Vienna Concluding Document 1989:  
  
"The participating States will ensure that the exercise of all the human rights and fundamental freedoms will not be subject to any restrictions except those which are provided by law and are consistent with their obligations under international law, in particular the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and with their international commitments, in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These restrictions have the character of exceptions. The OSCE participating States will ensure that these restrictions are not abused and are not applied in an arbitrary manner."
8. a. In order to implement these legal standards protecting the right to freedom of expression and belief by the OSCE participating states, it is

necessary to conduct training programmes for law enforcement and civil servants on freedom of belief and expression.

- b. The promotion of tolerance and respect for democratic rule of law is the responsibility of all citizens.
  - c. Civic leaders and religious figures to use their positions to foster tolerance based on democratic principles and respect for rule of law among their constituents.
  - d. In implementing programmes promoting tolerance, governments and civil society should pay particular attention to the inclusion of under-represented groups, including youth, women and ethnic and religious minorities.
  - e. The implementation of the recommendations from the Supplementary Human Dimension meeting of the OSCE of June 2001 on Promoting Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, which focused on education, multi-cultural and inter-confessional relations
  - f. To provide support for the UNESCO campaign in favour of teaching philosophy, which stresses a teaching of philosophy designed to promote open-mindedness, a sense of civic responsibilities, and mutual understanding and tolerance between persons and groups,
9. States and religious groups should cooperate to take measures to prevent conflicts based on religion