

Bahá'í International Community

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Statement for Session 7: Fundamental freedoms I, including freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief

Thank you, Madame Moderator. My name is Nura Detweiler from the Brussels Office of the Bahá'í International Community, which represents the worldwide Bahá'í Community. It seeks to contribute to global advancement through offering insights from the Bahá'í teachings and the experience of the worldwide Baha'i community in trying to put those insights into practice in support of efforts to address global challenges. The BIC believes that Freedom of Religion or Belief is a cornerstone of our current societies, whether here in Europe or the rest of the world. The pressing need facing us daily require us to look beyond the legal and institutional frameworks which uphold freedom of religion or belief, as important and essential as these frameworks are. We also need to focus on the crucial role the collaboration of religious or belief communities play in creating a culture in which FoRB for all is promoted and upheld. Without religious communities gaining a deeper understanding that their goal should not be merely to tolerate each other or to live side by side, legal and institutional frameworks remain limited in scope. Religious or belief communities need to wholeheartedly work together and collaborate to uphold this right. And for such collaboration to be sincere and meaningful, they need to focus on what unites them, instead of on what separates them from each other. They need to converse with each other without a sense of superiority or a feeling of having exclusive access to truth.

As protagonists in this process, religions and beliefs groups need to work hand in hand with each other, and the OSCE participating States need to create conditions in which such a culture is fostered.