

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE  
RUSSIAN FEDERATION AT THE OSCE SUPPLEMENTARY HUMAN  
DIMENSION MEETING ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF:  
ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THE SPECIFIC CHALLENGES OF  
COMBATING ANTI-SEMITISM AND INTOLERANCE AND  
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIANS, MUSLIMS, AND  
MEMBERS OF OTHER RELIGIONS**

Vienna, 22 and 23 June 2017

**Session II: Revisiting the normative status and scope of the right to  
freedom of religion or belief – issues of conceptualization and the challenge  
of implementing OSCE commitments**

Madam Moderator,  
Distinguished experts,

Freedom of thought, religion and belief is one of the fundamental rights enshrined both in instruments of international law and in States' commitments at the regional level.

An analysis of the situation of religious intolerance throughout Europe indicates that an issue that is coming into play is the protection of the rights of members of the religious majority, above all Christians. In Europe, a place where the culture is based on Christian values, Christianity is being squeezed out of public life, and protecting the Christian identity is becoming one of the forms of combating discrimination against Christians.

Not only is the intolerance and discrimination against Christians that already exists within several legal systems a cause for particular concern, but also the current new attempts to adopt politically motivated and discriminatory legislative initiatives.

An extremely glaring example of a policy of this type, involving a country targeting its own people, is the draft laws submitted for review to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine – No. 4128 “On amending the Law of Ukraine on the freedom of worship and of religious organizations”, and No. 4511 “On the special status of religious organizations with leadership centres located in a State designated as an aggressor country by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine”.

It is abundantly clear that the proposed amendments to the legislation related to the canonical Orthodox Church of Ukraine are blatantly discriminatory in nature and patently

violate the equality of religious organizations before the law. It is well known that these “initiatives” by the Ukrainian authorities have provoked a widespread public response both within and outside Ukraine.

Owing to the artificially created rupture between the religions in Ukraine, the churches and property of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church are regularly desecrated and seized by far right groups. The same members of far right groups, with the full connivance of the authorities, commit violence against clergy members.

The question is: How are these actions compatible not only with Ukraine’s relevant OSCE or Council of Europe commitments, but also with the application and execution of basic international agreements, such as many provisions of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination?

When discussing the issue of the “conceptual clarity” of the right to freedom of belief and, accordingly, of increasing the effectiveness of combating manifestations of intolerance and discrimination against members of the “majority”, it would also be useful to take heed of the relevant law enforcement practice of the European Court of Human Rights.

Definite steps have been taken in the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights in the cases of *Otto-Preminger-Institut versus Austria*, *Norwood versus United Kingdom*, or *Garaudy versus France*. However, these European Court of Human Rights rulings do not go far enough for there to be any talk of crafting meaningful legal approaches to taking the rights of the majority into consideration.

Consequently, there has long been a need in the OSCE area to adopt specific measures aimed at protecting the rights of members of traditional religions.

However, we regret to note that at the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Hamburg, certain delegations yet again sabotaged the adoption of specific ministerial decisions on the inadmissibility of discrimination against Christians and Muslims, at a time when this is particularly important in a multicultural Europe where the policy of multiculturalism has failed and the migration crisis has provoked the rise of far right radicalism.

Thank you for your attention.