



**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2013  
Warsaw, 26 September 2013**

**Statement by Georgia**

**Working Session 6: Freedom of Religion or Belief**

Thank you Mr. Moderator,

In order to ensure equal enjoyment of the right of freedom of religion or belief the Government of Georgia has undertaken following steps:

- On July 5, 2011 the Civil Code of Georgia was amended to allow registration of religious groups as religious associations. In order to ensure non-discriminatory approach, the amendment sets down objective and common sense criteria of eligibility. In particular, religious groups recognized as religious organizations in other member states of the Council of Europe or having close historic ties with Georgia are able to acquire the status of religious association.
- To provide even more flexibility and inclusiveness to the process of acquiring legal status by religious groups, the Civil Code provisions allowing them to register as non-profit legal entities of private law were left intact. It is therefore up to a religious group to decide whether it wants to be established as a legal entity of private law (non-profit association) or as a legal entity of public law (religious association). In either case, it will retain flexible and fully autonomous management structure (strict regulations prescribed for legal entities of public law will not apply to religious associations) and will be eligible for all benefits provided by the Georgian legislation.

Georgia's decision to adjust the legal status of many religious faiths and confessions was praised by the international community. It was widely acknowledged as a significant and progressive step in ensuring a more open and tolerant approach towards the practice of religious belief in Georgia. Co-rapporteurs of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Monitoring Committee for Georgia have underscored the importance of this amendment, calling it an important improvement for all religious communities in Georgia, in compliance with the recommendations by the Assembly.

Thank you for your attention.