

Delegation of Romania

**STATEMENT BY MR. ADRIAN LEMENI,
SECRETARY OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND
RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS, AT THE OSCE CONFERENCE ON
COMBATING DISCRIMINATION AND PROMOTING MUTUAL
RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING**

Bucharest, 7 and 8 June 2007

**Plenary Session 3: Combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination, also
focusing on intolerance and discrimination against Christians and
members of other religions**

The principle of non-discrimination in the religious life of Romania

Religious freedom is one of the most important elements in assessing the level of democratization of a country, and specialized discussions on this subject can only be beneficial for everyone.

Romania bases its attitude to religion and the various churches on the values proclaimed by the international community: freedom of conscience and religion and the unobstructed right of citizens to practise their own religion, individually or jointly with others, to act in accordance with their own convictions or to practise no religion. These principles are upheld and guaranteed by the Constitution of Romania, in Article 29. All religious denominations enjoy equality before the law, and the State, through administrative measures, ensures the protection of these rights and support for the activities of religious denominations, safeguarding the rights of religious minorities by practical measures.

Although religious denominations are free and autonomous vis-à-vis the State, the latter grants them financial support and tax advantages. Through the creation of the legislative framework and through the administrative measures adopted, the necessary conditions for the elimination of manifestations of inequality or religious or confessional intolerance have been established.

Questions relating to religious freedom, in their legislative and administrative aspects, fall within the competence of the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs. This central government department is responsible for safeguarding the rights and freedom of religion and conscience of all the country's citizens, in line with the provisions of the Constitution and of international conventions on human rights to which Romania is a party.

The legal framework created in our country and the practical measures adopted for its application allow special protection of religious denominations whose adherents belong to national minorities. In many cases, these benefit from positive discrimination in comparison with the majority population with regard to the distribution of subsidies as well as in the granting of other facilities.

When one analyses the situation of minorities in Romania and the conditions existing for the full assertion of their ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious identity, it may be stated that the potential causes of nationalistic, ethnocentric, xenophobic or racist manifestations have been eliminated.

In the religious area, Article 29 of the Constitution of Romania lays down that “in relations between religious denominations all forms, means, acts or actions of religious enmity shall be prohibited” and that “freedom of conscience must be manifested in a spirit of tolerance and mutual respect”.