



ENGLISH TRANSLATION

THE HOLY SEE

Statement of H.E. Bishop Mario Toso, SDB
Head of the Delegation of the Holy See
to the High-Level Meeting of the OSCE on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination
Astana, Kazakhstan, 29-30 June 2010
Session 2
Combating Anti-Semitism

Mr. President,

The history of the relationship between Israel and Christendom is drenched with blood and tears. It is a history of mistrust and hostility, but also—thank God—a history marked again and again by attempts at forgiveness, understanding and mutual acceptance. After Auschwitz, the mission of reconciliation and acceptance permits no deferral.¹

These words, written by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger many years ago, have found a renewed expression in his historic visit to the Synagogue of Rome on 17 January 2010. Pope Benedict XVI recalled the teaching of the Second Vatican Council which gave such a strong impetus to the irrevocable commitment to pursue the path of dialogue, fraternity and friendship between the Catholic community and our Jewish brothers and sisters, a journey which has been deepened and developed in the last forty years, through important steps and significant gestures.² The progress made in this important relationship is in no small part due to the work of the International Committee for Catholic-Jewish Relations and, in more recent years, by the Mixed Commission of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and of the Holy See, which have worked together in discovering anew a common spiritual patrimony, to keep open the space for dialogue, for reciprocal respect, for growth in friendship, and for a common witness in the face of the challenges of our time, which invite us to cooperate for the good of humanity.

The OSCE/ODIHR, in its strong commitment to combat anti-Semitism, is also engaged in a cooperative effort for the good of humanity. Such an effort involves inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue aimed at promoting tolerance, mutual recognition and, consequently, a form of coexistence between peoples that becomes a factor of peace. The Delegation of the Holy See encourages these efforts, and recognizes the need for this organization to forge ahead in its commitment to establish effective tools and mechanisms to fight against anti-Semitism, including in the media and particularly on the Internet.

Although progress has been made by these efforts, combating manifestations of systematic racial mistrust remains an ongoing challenge, one that necessarily involves a multi-faceted approach. We know all too well of the hateful, and often violent and death-dealing actions perpetrated against

¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Reconciling Gospel and Torah: The Catechism*, 1992.

² Cfr. Benedict XVI, *Address during his Visit to the Synagogue in Rome*, 17 January 2010.

Jewish people, their property and places of worship. Careless of the crimes committed in the past, certain organizations, with branches in many countries, keep alive the anti-Semite racist myth, with the support of networks of publications. “Today, in fact, people frequently kill in the holy name of God.”³ Terrorist acts which have Jewish and other religious persons or symbols as their target have increased in recent years and show the radicalism of such groups.

This said, the Holy See respectfully reiterates to this distinguished body something that it already knows, that the roots of racism, discrimination and intolerance are found in prejudice and ignorance, which are first of all the fruits of sin, but also of faulty and inadequate education. The role of education as a good practice to be promoted in the struggle against these evils is fundamental. As the OSCE/ODIHR seek to foster the development of educational programs in this regard, it is critical to advance the non-negotiable principle of the equal and inherent dignity of every person, a dignity that confers certain inalienable rights, most notably the right to life, and the right to religious liberty, and that these rights are always accompanied by the corresponding duty of the bearer of them to respect the dignity, personhood, and rights of others, no matter one’s race, religion, or ethnicity.

In concluding, Mr. President, the problem of anti-Semitism is caught up in a web of historic prejudices, ideological distortions, religious extremism, poor education and formation. The human family, in spite of its many advancements, has yet to learn from past sins. Anti-Semitism, discrimination against Muslims and against Christians are plagues that degrade humanity. Each of these must be properly cured. Part of this cure must be a more widespread promotion, at all levels, of human dignity, religious freedom, and mutual respect and understanding among all peoples. Because there are clear connections between those three major forms of intolerance and discrimination, and so as to avoid eventual reticence or unjustified selective actions on the part of Member States, a correct balance must be ensured between the commitments adopted by them. The effectiveness of the OSCE’s commitment against discrimination and intolerance depends to a great extent on the credibility of such a commitment, and the willingness to resist any inordinate attention to one while neglecting another. The Holy See remains committed to its cooperation with the OSCE in this regard.

Thank you, Mr. President.

³ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 29.