



## STATEMENT BY MONSIGNOR MICHAEL W. BANACH, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HOLY SEE, AT THE 929<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

## **8 NOVEMBER 2012**

## RE: REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE FOR DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Thank you, Mister Chairperson.

- 1. The Delegation of the Holy See joins the previous speakers in warmly welcoming back to the Permanent Council the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Ambassador Janez Lenarčič, and thanks him for his report on the 2012 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, recently held in Warsaw (Poland).
- 2. My Delegation has listened with interest to reflections of Ambassador Lenarčič on the dynamics of the interventions at the recent HDIM and, in particular, to his comments on the top sessions that had the highest numbers of interventions. We have noted that the most popular session of the HDIM was the one on tolerance and non discrimination. The popularity of this session undoubtedly testifies to the importance which the OSCE attaches to the promotion of tolerance and non discrimination in those areas where participating States have reached agreement. Agreed commitments should not remain mere theoretical guidelines. They are, in reality, inspiring principles both for the OSCE and for the activities of the ODIHR and, at the same time, they set clear boundaries which must be respected to guarantee the effectiveness and the "value added" approach in the area of the defense of human rights.
- 3. The question of the peaceableness of cultures, of peace, of tolerance and of freedom, especially in matters of religion, has also moved up to become a political and security theme of the first rank.

There is no place in the modern world for anti-Semitism. In order to combat intolerance and discrimination against Muslims all of us must learn to work together. We

should also hold firm to a basic principle of this Organization that rejects "the identification of terrorism with any nationality or religion".

This Organization also has clear consensual commitments to address the denial of rights, exclusion and marginalization of Christians and members of other religions in our societies. There are many incidents of hate crimes against Christians and the Holy See has reported these to the ODIHR for inclusion in the Annual Hate Crimes Report. Last year's Rome Meeting on Preventing and Responding to Hate Crimes and Incidents against Christians made an important contribution to the discussion and the implementation of relative OSCE commitments. In this regard, my Delegation is also willing to work with the ODIHR in elaborating educational material on combating hate crimes against Christians.

**4.** The Holy See welcomes the fact that freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief was chosen as one of the specific topics at this year's HDIM and that an entire day was dedicated to an evaluation of the implementation of this fundamental freedom. Human rights, of course, must include the right to religious freedom, understood as the expression of a dimension that is at once individual and communitarian.

The discussion on this specific topic clearly revealed that the rights associated with religion are all the more in need of protection especially if they are considered to clash with a prevailing secular ideology or with majority religious positions of an exclusive nature. The full guarantee of religious freedom cannot simply be limited to the free exercise of worship; it must also give due consideration to the public dimension of religion and, hence, to the possibility of believers exercising their responsibility in building the social order. Every violation of religious freedom, whether overt or concealed, does fundamental damage to the cause of peace and security. Recognition of the religious dimension must be strengthened if we are to create the conditions for peace, development, cooperation, and guarantee human rights for future generations.

My Delegation would like to encourage the ODIHR to increase its efforts in promoting this fundamental human right, equally valid for majority and minority religious groups, and assures the ODIHR and other participating States of its willingness to work with them to this end.

- 5. Other areas of particular interest for the Holy See at the 2012 HDIM were: freedom of the media; human rights education; migrant workers; national minorities; Roma and Sinti; and the fight against trafficking in human beings. We are grateful for the opportunity to reflect on these important consensual issues with other participating States.
- **6.** In conclusion, I would like to assure the Director of the ODIHR of the cooperation of the Delegation of the Holy See and renew the wish for every success as he continues to carry out the mandate entrusted to him by the participating States.

Thank you, Mister Chairperson!