

PC.SHDM.GAL/1/18

23 April 2018

ENGLISH only



## Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting

### **FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF: ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THE SPECIFIC CHALLENGES OF COMBATTING ANTI-SEMITISM AND INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIANS, MUSLIMS AND MEMBERS OF OTHER RELIGIONS**

**22-23 JUNE 2017  
HOFBURG, VIENNA**

## **FINAL REPORT**



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## **OVERVIEW**

### **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The first Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting (SHDM) of 2017, organized by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) and the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship in Vienna on 22-23 June, provided a forum to discuss the nature, status and scope of the universal right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) in light of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security and to discuss concrete actions for its advancement. It offered an opportunity to take stock of the OSCE commitments in the sphere of FoRB and tolerance and non-discrimination (TND) in the wake of current and emerging issues in the region, to exchange views on good practices, and to offer recommendations. The meeting brought together 176 participants, including 81 representatives from 36 OSCE participating States, one representative from one OSCE Partner for Co-operation (Afghanistan), 81 representatives of 58 non-governmental organizations, 9 participants from the OSCE institutions and executive structures (OSCE Secretariat, Action against Terrorism Unit, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the OSCE Parliamentary Liaison Office, and the OSCE/ODIHR), and four representatives of two international organizations (Council of Europe and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights).

The meeting was organized around four working sessions:

- Freedom of religion or belief, non-discrimination and other human rights and fundamental freedoms as the essential normative basis for peaceful coexistence and security in the OSCE region;
- 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;
- Challenges of combatting anti-Semitism and intolerance and discrimination against Christians, Muslims and members of other religions;
- Interfaith and interreligious dialogue and co-operation and creating the conditions for peaceful and secure societies in the OSCE region.

### **II. SYNOPSIS OF THE SESSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This section summarizes the discussions which took place during the opening session and the four thematic sessions and presents recommendations made by participants. The recommendations were directed towards a variety of actors, including the OSCE participating States, the OSCE institutions and executive structures, and religious or belief

communities. These recommendations have no official status as they are not based on consensus among the 57 OSCE participating States. Further, the inclusion of a recommendation in this report does not suggest that it reflects the views or policies of the OSCE. Nevertheless, these recommendations serve as useful indicators of how participating States are meeting their commitments pertaining to FoRB and tolerance and non-discrimination as well as their views on follow-up activities in this area.

## **OPENING SESSION**

Opening remarks were delivered by Ambassador Clemens Koja, Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council and Permanent Representative of Austria to the OSCE, and by Mr. Michael Georg Link, Director of the OSCE/ODIHR. These were followed by the keynote speech of Professor Marco Ventura, Professor of law and religion at the University of Siena and a member of the OSCE/ODIHR Panel of Experts on FoRB<sup>1</sup>.

Ambassador Koja welcomed the participants on behalf of the OSCE Chairmanship and mentioned that many places see grave threats to peace and security which have a detrimental impact on human rights and fundamental freedoms, in general, and on FoRB, in particular. He further pointed out that the level of respect for religious freedom is a clear indicator of the respect for many other, closely interlinked human rights, such as freedom of association and assembly, and freedom of opinion and expression. Referring to the 1975 Helsinki final Act, Ambassador Koja stated that the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, and fostering mutual respect and understanding are among the original tenets of the OSCE.

Ambassador Koja highlighted that FoRB and the broader topic of tolerance and non-discrimination are one of Austrian Chairmanship's priorities in the OSCE human dimension and three Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office have been appointed to foster tolerance and dialogue in support of the Chairmanship agenda. In calling for an open and constructive dialogue as an effective instrument to foster respect, co-operation and leading to a common understanding, Ambassador Koja noted Austria's long-standing foreign policy commitments in the area of intra- and interreligious dialogue as well as in open and transparent dialogue between public authorities and members of different religious or belief communities.

In his opening remarks, Director Link placed the convening of the SHDM in the context of the serious challenges to the full and free exercise of the right to FoRB by everyone in the OSCE region. In this connection, he referred to two significant threats to FoRB. One, the view, which is gaining currency in the region, that some religions or beliefs are extraneous

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<sup>1</sup> The full text of the opening remarks can be found in AnnexII.

to the identity of a people and a nation and can therefore endanger peace and social cohesion. Two, the suppression of FoRB by those governments wishing to exercise wide-ranging control over society. Against the background of these and other worrying developments, Director Link invited participants to address a question of fundamental importance, namely how the OSCE participating States can provide an open, inclusive space which ensures the full and non-discriminatory implementation of the right to FoRB for all. Director Link noted the powerful role that interfaith and interreligious communication and dialogue can play in creating and maintaining trust, understanding and co-operation among and between people of different religions and beliefs. While emphasizing the need to find ways to realize the full potential of dialogue for creating the conditions for peace and security in the OSCE region, he nevertheless reminded participants that this activity can never replace the State's duties under international human rights law to guarantee FoRB for all.

Director Link also commented on the potential of the SHDM to serve as an important space for an exchange of views and experiences on national and local policies and practices related to the implementation of the OSCE commitments in the area of FoRB and tolerance and non-discrimination, and assured participants of ODIHR's ongoing support and assistance to ensure the realization of these objectives.

In his keynote speech, Professor Ventura argued that the OSCE region suffers from two fundamental misunderstandings about FoRB; one, the view that FoRB is an "empty" right devoid of content and meaning and therefore not to be taken seriously and two, FoRB as a "threatening" right, one to be feared. Elaborating on the first point, Professor Ventura highlighted that FoRB is still not a key element in the domestic policies of a region dominated by economic and security concerns, which is surprising given the well-established connections between respect for FoRB and widespread societal benefits. Referring to the conception of FoRB as a "threatening" right, Professor Ventura noted that FoRB is being increasingly perceived as a tool in the hands of subversive forces which, if left unchecked, would threaten the traditions and identities of the majority as well as of wider social cohesion, security and other human rights.

Professor Ventura further explained that both misunderstandings are rooted in a static view of society, identity and traditions, as well as in the denial of the dynamic reality of religion and belief itself. He further noted that both interpretations also conduce to a stagnant vision of our present and future thereby hindering the full enjoyment of human rights for all and fuelling intolerance and discrimination. Building upon these observations, Professor Ventura underscored the need to depart from such a static vision of religion or belief to embrace a more dynamic and richer understanding.

Referring to the comprehensive catalogue of the OSCE human dimension commitments and the tools at the OSCE's disposal to implement these, including the various human dimension mechanisms and the role of the OSCE/ODIHR, Professor Ventura called on participants to draw on and utilise these assets in order to take full advantage of what he called the "connecting" power of FoRB. FoRB, Professor Ventura asserted, has a powerful connecting role on at least two levels; at the level of actors, it can connect individuals to communities and nations; operating at the policy level, it is able to connect democratic norms and rights with, co-operation and security. He commented that this "connecting power" of FoRB is integral to the sustainable development of the region covered by the OSCE and its Partners for Co-operation.

## **SESSION I: FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF, NON-DISCRIMINATION AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS AS THE ESSENTIAL NORMATIVE BASIS FOR PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AND SECURITY IN THE OSCE REGION**

### *Introducers:*

**Dr. Susan Kerr**, Europe Advocacy Manager, Christian Solidarity Worldwide

**Mr. Alexandr Klyushev**, Chairperson, Association of Religious Organizations of Kazakhstan

### *Moderator:*

**Mr. Omer Fisher**, Head of the Human Rights Department, OSCE/ODIHR

Dr. Kerr provided a brief overview of the comprehensive concept of security and the normative framework of the rights-security relationship outlined by the OSCE, highlighting that the equal and indiscriminate application of human rights, including FoRB, is linked to the building of democracy and positive peace. She stressed that the vision of comprehensive security calls for a holistic understanding of the human rights framework as reflected in international human rights treaties and the Helsinki Final Act, with no hierarchy among human rights and fundamental freedoms. Dr. Kerr explained that human, and thus, social capital development relies upon what FoRB protects, namely the right of each individual to freely think, critique, invent, construct, and express ideas without fear of reprisals or intimidation.

Citing empirical research, Dr. Kerr highlighted the association between the level of restrictions on FoRB and the likelihood of violent persecution, conflict, instability, and terrorism. Referring to enhanced security measures undertaken in response to acts of violence perpetrated in the name of religion in the OSCE region, Dr. Kerr stressed the risk of conflating the actions of a few with the thoughts and beliefs of many. Dr. Kerr argued that approaches which seek to control the activities of certain religious communities are by

nature discriminatory and contrary to the building of a positive peace. She further explained that an emphasis on stability should not lead to subordinating human rights norms, including FoRB, to broadly defined security and public order concerns. In this connection, she emphasized that national security is not a permissible ground on which FoRB may be limited under international law.

Dr. Kerr also drew attention to the fact that different groups may experience different levels of discrimination within religious communities. In this regard, she specifically cited the experience of women, who are often subjected to double discrimination on account of both their gender and religion, and called on all OSCE participating States to ensure that women have equal access to justice and can fully exercise their human rights. She further pointed out that any measures aimed to enhance security need to be informed by the realities faced by minority religious communities lest such actions exacerbate inequalities between majority and minority groups in society.

Mr. Klyushev commented that the global human rights situation has been deteriorating in recent years, citing rising intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in the OSCE region as an example of this. He also referred to moves to disproportionately restrict the rights of minority religious communities in certain OSCE participating States, including the wholesale banning of their activities, under the banner of fighting “religious extremism”. He went on to underscore that the OSCE participating States need to strengthen human rights and FoRB, in particular, as a means to promote security and peace.

Highlighting the current climate of misinformation about religions and beliefs, Mr. Klyushev stated that the emergence of an information vacuum in this regard feeds into an overall culture of suspicion that potentially incites violence against specific groups. In his view, it is crucial that religious communities have access to the media in order to engage in public discussions about religion and to promote dialogue and peace. Mr. Klyushev went on to highlight the role of majority religions in influencing governments to safeguard FoRB for all and called on OSCE participating States to promote a better understanding of FoRB within majority religious communities.

In the subsequent discussion, participants endorsed the OSCE commitments on FoRB and tolerance and non-discrimination and called on participating States to redouble their efforts to ensure domestic implementation of these. They reaffirmed their understanding of FoRB’s close relationship with other human rights, such as freedom of association and assembly and freedom of opinion and expression, and stated that FoRB is integral to efforts to ensure peace and security throughout the OSCE region. In this context, some participants stressed that the state of FoRB is an indicator of the state of democracy as a whole, but that experience suggests that FoRB is one of the most weakly protected of human rights. Participants also highlighted the role of the secular state in safeguarding FoRB for all and

urged participating States to adopt a non-discriminatory attitude and approach towards religious or belief communities on their territories. A number of participants also commented on the role of FoRB in supporting efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT).

A number of participants reported on the discriminatory impact of restrictive laws and practices adopted by authorities in the fight against VERLT and called on participating States to rescind all laws and practices limiting the full enjoyment of FoRB. A number of examples of such restrictive measures were cited, such as significant obstacles to acquiring legal personality on the part of religious or belief communities, confiscation of property, raids on places of worship, and interference with the appointment of religious personnel.

Some participants drew attention to the ongoing persecution of Christians within the OSCE region and outside, stating that 2016 was the worst year for Christians in modern history. In this context, they shared reports of serious problems facing asylum seekers of Christian backgrounds in refugee camps in certain participating States.

Referring to the rising levels of intolerance, discrimination and acts perpetrated against Muslims and their property, a number of participants argued that “Islamophobia” has become a new form of racism. They further highlighted that these trends are fuelled by populist rhetoric, underscoring the contribution made by certain politicians and sections of the media in this regard. Participants further stressed that many hate crimes against Muslims go underreported owing to distrust of public authorities and called on authorities to refrain from spreading anti-Muslim sentiments in society.

A number of participants expressed concern at the discrimination faced by minority religious communities in the OSCE region, citing the situation of the Yazidis and the Jehovah’s Witnesses as notable examples in this regard, and called on participating States to protect the rights of all religious minorities. Other participants stressed the particular experience of women and LGBTI individuals who often face multiple forms of discrimination both from within and without their religious communities, with Muslim women being openly discriminated against in public spaces.

The following specific recommendations were made in Session I:

*Recommendations to OSCE participating States:*

- OSCE participating States should fully implement all OSCE human dimension commitments, including on FoRB;
- OSCE participating States should promote FoRB through positive and affirmative actions;

- OSCE participating States should make full use of the expertise that has been developed within ODIHR to assist with efforts to advance FoRB for all, including its Panel of Experts on FoRB;
- OSCE participating States should reaffirm that right to FoRB operates not only in the private sphere but also extends to the public sphere;
- OSCE participating States should deepen co-operation with civil society organizations and religious or belief communities to raise awareness among the general public about the existence of diverse religions and beliefs in the OSCE region.

*Recommendations to the OSCE, its institutions and executive structures:*

- The OSCE should streamline measures to counter VERLT in the OSCE region;
- The OSCE should co-operate more closely with the Council of Europe on FoRB and tolerance and non-discrimination issues;
- OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine should continue to monitor the implementation of the OSCE FoRB commitments throughout the entire territory of Ukraine;
- OSCE/ODIHR should increase its capacity to monitor and report on the implementation of FoRB commitments in the OSCE region, including cases where religion is used as a pretext to justify discrimination on other grounds;
- OSCE/ODIHR should provide more training for police officers and law enforcement agencies on hate crimes and appropriate response mechanisms;

**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**

*Introducers:*

**Ambassador Jean-Christophe Peaucelle**, Advisor for Religious Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France

**Prof. Brett Scharffs**, Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University

*Moderator:*

**Ms. Stacy Bernard Davis**, Unit Chief for Europe and Eurasia, Office of International Religious Freedom, US Department of State

In his remarks, Ambassador Peaucelle stated that, notwithstanding its status as an inalienable and universal human right, FoRB remains under serious threat in the OSCE region. Referring to the conceptualisation of FoRB outlined in international standards and

OSCE commitments, he underscored the importance of affording a broad understanding to FoRB. In this regard, he noted that FoRB applies equally to believers and non-believers, is a right with individual and collective dimensions, and can be expressed in private as well as in public. Ambassador Peaucelle went on to remind participants that any restrictions on FoRB must be exceptional, proportionate, non-discriminatory and justiciable.

Ambassador Peaucelle elaborated on the French experience and understanding of the principle of secularism, pointing out that Church-state relations in France are governed by a law dating back to 1905. He noted that the principle of secularism aimed to put an end to the ideological confrontation between the legacy of the French Revolution and the Catholic identity of the country. This historical process, he went on to explain, culminated in the emergence and adoption of certain fundamental French values, namely *liberty*, understood as freedom of conscience guaranteed by the State; *equality*, meaning that all citizens are equal before the law while the state is obliged to be neutral; and *fraternity*, meaning that citizens form a unity despite differences in faith. Building upon these remarks, Ambassador Peaucelle commented that religious communities should have the right to enjoy the right of freedom to expression, but must also respect the right to freedom of expression, and therefore tolerate criticism in return, and called on OSCE participating States to ensure that FoRB also applies to non-believers, including atheists and agnostics.

Professor Scharffs' presentation was structured around two main themes: the performance of OSCE participating States in the area of FoRB, including religious majorities and FoRB, and the problem of the "securitization of freedom".

Analyzing the data provided in the April 2016 study undertaken by the Pew Research Center looking at limitations on religious freedom resulting from formal legal enactments and social hostilities, Professor Scharffs pointed out that dominant religious groups can themselves be significant obstacles to FoRB for all. Drawing on this study, it was noted that OSCE participating States with a religious majority representing more than 70% of the population tend to register high or very high legal restrictions as well as social hostilities relating to religion. In the view of Professor Scharffs, this suggests the possibility that religious majorities, operating in ways that are analogous to industrial monopolies, inhibit FoRB for dissenters from the majority faith as well as minority religious groups.

Professor Scharffs also referred to the growing problem of the "securitization of freedom", which he defined as the tendency to view freedom through the lens of security. This approach, he noted, seeks to define the scope of freedoms from the start after viewing them through the prism of security concerns and stands in contrast to the human rights approach to balancing rights (in this case, FoRB and security). Professor Scharffs pointed out that a human rights approach starts with a presumption in favour of FoRB, and that if an interference or limitation on FoRB is imposed by the state, then the state has the burden of proving that the measure in question serves as legitimate grounds for limitation. In this

regard, Professor Scharffs emphasized that neither “security” nor “national security” are listed in international or regional standards as a ground for limiting FoRB. He discussed how the securitization of FoRB adopts a very different approach by starting with the presumption that all rights must be defined in relation to “security” or “national security” interests. In this approach, when a balancing of FoRB against state interests does take place, the balance is likely to favour the state’s security concerns. Professor Scharffs commented that a number of reasons contribute to the difficulty of balancing, including in some cases, where a greater weight is attached by courts to states’ security interests, and often cases in which a state’s interests are exaggerated. As a result, according to Professor Scharffs, the “securitization of freedom” leads to a weakening and fracturing of the FoRB interest in question, and results in balancing that is less likely to achieve a sensitive weighing of the state’s interest in a particular limitation versus an individual’s particular interest in FoRB. In conclusion, Professor Scharffs stated that the OSCE as an institution is uniquely situated to think constructively about the relationship between FoRB on the one hand and security on the other. However, in his view, the OSCE has not yet risen to the challenge of leadership in this area. He expressed the hope that the OSCE will indeed assert the natural leadership it should have in resisting the securitization of freedom.

The ensuing discussion emphasized not only the importance of implementing existing OSCE commitments on FoRB, but also that FoRB cannot be separated from other fundamental rights and freedoms. Participants noted that participating States must ensure that FoRB is given a broad protection: it covers the rights of believers and non-believers alike.

Participants drew attention to the growing trend in the OSCE region to limit the scope of FoRB under the pretext of fighting VERLT and that security concerns do not legitimate the targeting of specific religious or belief communities. Rather, participating States must find ways to ensure FoRB for all while addressing genuine security-related challenges. It was pointed out that while international human rights law allows, with high thresholds, for certain restrictions related to the manifestation of religion or belief, any and all limitations must be the exception, and not the rule. According to Article 18(3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which must be strictly interpreted, all limitations on the right to FoRB must be prescribed by law, and they must be necessary and directly related to the pursuit of a non-exhaustive number of legitimate aims. Further, these restrictions must also be applied in a non-discriminatory manner and be proportionate to the realization of the legitimate aim and, therefore, be the least restrictive among all the adequate measures that could possibly be applied.

In this regard, it was specifically noted that undue restrictions on FoRB tend to foment instability and insecurity by marginalizing members of religious or belief communities and increasing their vulnerability to violent extremism ideologies. Several participants shared examples from around the OSCE region of restrictions on the scope of FoRB, including the

refusal by public authorities to allocate land for the construction of religious premises, confiscation of church property, and limitations to equal religious instruction in public schools. To address these and other situations where FoRB is under pressure, participants encouraged civil society organizations and religious or belief communities to collaborate in grassroots efforts to realize FoRB for all.

The relationship between FoRB and other human rights was also highlighted. They belong to the same human rights framework. FoRB should therefore not be advanced in ways that impede the enjoyment of other human rights.

With regard to incidents where religion is used to justify acts of violence or is used as a tool to incite violence, it was mentioned that religious or belief communities, and particularly their leadership, need to promptly and unequivocally condemn such incidents.

The following specific recommendations were made in Session II:

*Recommendations to OSCE participating States:*

- OSCE participating States should repeal restrictive and vaguely defined laws designed to combat VERLT as they are often used to restrict human rights, including the rights of religious or belief communities;
- OSCE participating States should apply due empirical and normative diligence when seeking to restrict manifestations of FoRB in line with international standards in this area;
- OSCE participating States should intensify efforts to combat intolerance and discrimination against Christians;
- OSCE participating States should follow up on the 2014 Basel Ministerial Declaration on Enhancing Efforts to Combat Anti-Semitism, which encourages participating States to elaborate Ministerial Council Declarations on enhancing efforts to combat intolerance and discrimination, including against Muslims, Christians and members of other religions;
- OSCE participating States should precisely define such terms as non-violent extremism, violent extremism and terrorism in their legislation and policies.

Recommendations to the OSCE, its institutions and executive structures:

- Relevant OSCE institutions and field operations should continue their efforts to promote enhanced dialogue between state authorities and religious or belief communities on how FoRB can be respected when addressing security concerns;
- Relevant OSCE institutions and field operations should take active steps to include civil society organizations in efforts to promote FoRB and TBD issues;
- Relevant OSCE institutions and field operations should encourage participating States to ensure that FoRB is respected when framing legislation and policies pertaining to the display of religious symbols in public spaces;
- Relevant OSCE institutions and field operations should strengthen their monitoring of the domestic implementation of commitments on FoRB by OSCE participating States;
- Relevant OSCE institutions and field operations should provide assistance to participating States when drawing up National Action Plans for the full implementation of FoRB.

Recommendations to religious or belief communities:

- Religious or belief communities, and particularly their leadership, need to promptly and unequivocally condemn incidents where religion is used to justify acts of violence or is used as a tool to incite violence.

**SESSION III: CHALLENGES OF COMBATTING ANTI-SEMITISM AND INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIANS, MUSLIMS AND MEMBERS OF OTHER RELIGIONS**

*Introducers:*

**Prof. Ingeborg Gabriel**, Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combatting Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions

**Rev. Dr. C. Welton Gaddy**, President Emeritus and Senior Advisor of Interfaith Alliance Foundation and Radio Host of “State of Belief” in Washington D.C.

**Dr. Farid Hafez**, Political Science Department at the University of Salzburg

*Moderator:*

**Mr. Larry Olomofe**, Advisor on combatting racism and xenophobia and intolerance against Christians and other groups, OSCE/ODIHR

In her remarks, Professor Gabriel reminded participants that the right to practice one’s religion without facing repression by the state constitutes one of the pillars of the Helsinki process. Yet, Professor Gabriel emphasized that the OSCE region is witnessing decreasing

levels of tolerance while polarisations along ethnic and religious lines are increasing. She further noted that the narrative of intolerance has become central to a number of political parties and programmes which seek to preserve so-called traditional or national values. She further expressed concerns regarding the limitation placed on human rights, including FoRB, in response to the threat emanating from VERLT.

As strategy to address these challenges, Professor Gabriel highlighted the need for a broad public reflection in the societies of the OSCE region on which values ought to be our guiding principles. This, she asserted, should include a reflection on the indivisible relationship between legal and moral dimensions of social and political order. According to Professor Gabriel, any legal order, particularly any democratic order, needs strong moral foundations since laws can only be implemented effectively if they are grounded in the moral convictions of a larger number of citizens. Citing the example of a policeman who will report a hate crime against a religious community only when he is morally convinced of his task, Professor Gabriel argued that obligations alone are not enough to counter non-tolerance and discrimination.

Professor Gabriel also called for a closer co-operation between states and religious communities. In her view, religious communities should be treated as partners in any enterprise to foster mutual understanding and respect in society as a whole. She further highlighted the need for a discussion about the duties of religious communities and believers in constitutional states, including the requirement for them to uphold the values and principles of the constitutional order and to be actively engaged in working for the common good.

Elaborating on the relationship between religion and politics, Rev. Dr. Gaddy emphasized that the influence of dominant religions on political power tends to be problematic since FoRB is a prerequisite for the independence of governments and expression of religions alike. He further noted that religions tend to embrace dogmatic beliefs and a strong moral dimension, which can not only be problematic for non-believers but lead to displays of intolerance towards other religions.

Rev. Dr. Gaddy went on to highlight that without the will to compromise and to seek dialogue on the part of religious communities, disagreement and intolerance tends to prevail with the result that religions will never be trusted as a source of truth, reconciliation, and peace. In this context, Rev. Dr. Gaddy stressed that the legitimacy of religions relies on their respect for diversity, equality, pluralism and the protection of the basic rights and freedoms of all. Such an approach would also require religious leaders to clearly distant themselves from “religious extremists” in order to eradicate hate, intolerance and violence committed in the name of their religion. Rev. Dr. Gaddy went on to note that interreligious dialogue and co-operation are needed in order to reclaim religion from extremists.

In his presentation, Dr. Hafez referred to a recent Chatham House Survey discussing European attitudes towards immigration from Muslim countries, and called on OSCE participating States to actively reject and condemn manifestations of anti-Muslim hatred and intolerance whenever and wherever they occur. Dr. Hafez further stated that “Islamophobia” is the widest form of racism in Europe. Highlighting the commitments enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act, Dr. Hafez urged political leaders to speak out against manifestations of “Islamophobia” and to address the structural dimension of anti-Muslim intolerance and discrimination perpetuated within government institutions.

Dr. Hafez noted that more efforts need to be taken to improve the collection of data on hate crimes by ensuring bias/category and gender-disaggregated data. He highlighted the introduction of “anti-religious” bias as a category in the national documentation of racism in Austria as a good practice. Outlining the shortcomings in responses to incidents of discrimination, intolerance and hate directed towards Muslims, Dr. Hafez pointed out that the vast majority of Muslim citizens of European countries are not familiar with existing response mechanisms and that Muslim communities need to be empowered if the quality of democracy in Europe is to be strengthened.

During the ensuing discussion, participants stated that the full implementation of the human right to FoRB is the sure basis on which to combat all manifestations of religious-related intolerance and discrimination. Participants noted with concern the rise in the OSCE region of various forms of intolerance and discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief as manifest in hate speech, damage to places of worship and other religious property, the display of Nazi symbols, the denial of registration to religious communities, and the refusal to open places of worship.

With regard to the challenges of combatting intolerance and discrimination, participants pointed to the problems of underreporting and the crucial role of the police. In this context, many participants emphasized that police actions are frequently driven by discriminatory stereotypes leading to a lack of trust in law enforcement agencies, ineffective investigations of hate crimes and impunity of perpetrators. Some participants stressed that existing data continue to be gender blind and that only a few OSCE participating States effectively collect reliable hate crime data. In this context participants called on OSCE participating States to improve their data collection and response mechanisms as a key means to combat intolerance and discrimination more effectively.

A number of participants emphasized the importance of communication and dialogue between religious communities and the need for religious leaders to speak out in favour of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The following specific recommendations were made in Session III:

*Recommendations to OSCE participating States:*

- OSCE participating States should ensure that gender issues are mainstreamed when addressing FoRB;
- OSCE participating States should create more available, accessible and clear response mechanisms to address manifestations of intolerance and discrimination against Muslims;
- OSCE participating States should strengthen multi-religious and multi-ethnic conviviality and promote activities that promote inclusion through education, interreligious as well as interethnic encounters and particularly common actions to increase tolerance and non-discrimination;
- OSCE participating States should break down stereotypes that have been perpetuated through negative media coverage by implementing training, education and awareness-raising programmes to prevent intolerance and discrimination especially among police, public officials and teachers;
- OSCE participating States should address anti-Semitism and use the practical guidelines for government authorities developed by ODIHR in the framework of the current “Words Into Action” project.

*Recommendations to the OSCE, its institutions and executive structures:*

- Relevant OSCE institutions and field operations should establish solid monitoring and recording mechanisms for incidents of discrimination and hate crimes;
- OSCE institutions and field operations should promote more effective hate crime data collection strategies among the police;
- OSCE/ODIHR should encourage participating States to involve civil society organizations in the collection of hate crime data;
- OSCE/ODIHR should collect and share best practices on how participating States can facilitate tolerance and non-discrimination through co-operation with civil society organizations;
- OSCE/ODIHR should promote human rights education to facilitate a deeper understanding of human rights and particularly FoRB among youth in the OSCE region.

## **SESSION IV: INTERFAITH AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AND CO-OPERATION AND CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR PEACEFUL AND SECURE SOCIETIES IN THE OSCE REGION**

### *Introducers:*

**Ms. Ekaterina Chitanava**, Director of the Tolerance and Diversity Institute, Tbilisi

**Ms. Gabrielle Westhead**, Convenor of the European Interfaith Youth Network; Chairperson, UK Interfaith Youth Network

### *Moderator:*

**Dr. Kishan Manocha**, Senior Adviser on Freedom of Religion or Belief, OSCE/ODIHR

Ms. Chitanava opened her remarks by stating interfaith dialogue refers to positive and co-operative interactions between people of different faiths and beliefs and reminded participants that such dialogue can only take place between equals. Drawing on the categorization proposed by the Vatican Council for Interreligious Dialogue in 1991, she explained that three general types of dialogue can usually be discerned, namely the dialogue of theology; the dialogue of spirituality; and the dialogue of action. Ms. Chitanava further noted that dialogue can also be based on three approaches - exclusivity, inclusivity and commonality.

To illustrate interfaith dialogue in action, Ms. Chitanava presented the work of the Council of Religions under the auspices of the Tolerance Centre at Public Defender of Georgia. She commented that the Council has proven itself as an effective instrument for interfaith and interreligious dialogue between religious minorities, facilitating their civic engagement and empowering them to take common action. She noted that the Council brings together 32 religious organizations in Georgia and bases its work on democratic principles including equality, FoRB, open and transparent dialogue, tolerance, and shared social responsibility. Highlighting a few of the Council's main achievements, including efforts to secure governmental recognition of conscientious objection against military service and the registration of religious communities as legal entities, Ms. Chitanava stressed that the main challenge has been how to engage the majority religious community in the Council's work.

Drawing on her experience of contributing to the work of the Religions for Peace European Interfaith Youth Network (EIYN), Ms. Westhead shared a number of personal reflections about the nature and value of interfaith dialogue. She emphasized that dialogue needs to be inclusive if it is to be successful in its aim of working towards creating a global society where no one is left behind. She noted that interfaith dialogue requires introspection,

listening, and learning to let go of deep-seated prejudices. She also pointed out that it is important to have a vision of what one wants and expects from the dialogue process.

Ms. Westhead also discussed the importance of engaging youth in interfaith and interreligious dialogue activities. Reflecting on the reference to young people as “critical agents of change” in the United Nations “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, she commented that youth are central to creating a peaceful and just society as they are the next generation of religious and political leaders and educators.

With regard to the role of interfaith and interreligious dialogue in shaping the future, Ms. Westhead stressed that creative ways encouraging young people to take on the challenge of interreligious dialogue and associated activities need to be found in order to move from a culture of violence to a culture of peace. She cited the EIYN, a body composed of 25 European youth faith-based organizations and non-religious organizations engaged in interfaith dialogue, as an example of how the “priceless potential” of youth is being created, supported and nurtured towards positive and peaceful ends.

During the subsequent discussion participants underlined the importance of interfaith and interreligious dialogue and stressed that effective dialogue also has a positive impact beyond the religious sphere, promoting peace, security and stability in general. Participants noted the diversity of dialogue in terms of the wide range of possible settings, forums, agendas, themes, goals and procedures it can embrace, and shared good practices in this regard. In elaborating on the distinctive contributions of formal and informal dialogue processes, it was pointed out how informal dialogue activities may offer particularly valuable spaces – including at the neighbourhood or local level – for creating mutual understanding as they are natural and involve constant interaction between participants.

A number of participants emphasized that dialogue is a skill, which like any other can be learnt. In order to ensure that interfaith and interreligious dialogue is a process through which greater levels of respect, understanding, and trustful co-operation are generated, it needs to be broad-based and inclusive; and encounters need to be conducted on an equal footing.

The role of the state in promoting and facilitating interfaith and interreligious dialogue was another theme addressed by participants. In this regard, it was noted that dialogue can be formally institutionalized or evolve spontaneously. A distinction was drawn between dialogue conducted between public authorities and religious or belief communities, and dialogue among and between these communities. It was pointed out that the term “interfaith and interreligious dialogue” refers specifically to this latter activity, and that while it is appropriate for states to promote initiatives of interreligious dialogue, communities must always be free to establish dialogue on their own initiative without depending on state

approval. In addition, participants noted that the state should not use its engagement with religious or belief communities as a cover to infringe upon the internal autonomy of these communities, but to better understand and eventually address their concerns. In line with the requirement of conceptual inclusiveness in the sense that all religious or belief communities should get their fair share of attention and options, it was stated it was important to extend participation in dialogue activities to minority religious communities and non-believers, as well as atheists and agnostics. Some participants addressed the responsibility of religious communities to provide religious instruction but also called on religious and faith-based organizations to set aside theological differences and to engage in a broad process education about the diversity of religions and beliefs at the local level in order to promote peace. As part of the ongoing effort to address challenges to domestic implementation of OSCE commitments on FoRB, some participants suggested that religious or belief communities should develop their own theological or philosophical justifications for respecting FoRB for all.

The following specific recommendations were made in Session IV:

*Recommendations to OSCE participating States:*

- OSCE participating States should promote or facilitate interfaith and interreligious dialogue processes that set aside theological differences and aim to bring together participants to explore common ground;
- OSCE participating States should encourage and support the establishment and work of national inter-religious councils and co-operate with them;
- OSCE participating States should include a special focus on youth and youth co-operation as part of their work to ensure peace and security;
- OSCE participating States should introduce an interfaith dialogue curriculum that would assist individuals of every religion or belief to come together.

*Recommendations to the OSCE, its institutions and executive structures:*

- Relevant OSCE institutions and field operations should develop a project that advances an understanding of the nature, importance and role of interfaith and interreligious dialogue processes;
- The OSCE should convene a yearly meeting dedicated to interfaith dialogue involving a wide cross-section of governments, religious or belief communities, youth, and women;
- Relevant OSCE institutions and field operations and the Personal Representatives of the Chair-in-Office dealing with tolerance and non-discrimination issues should participate in existing interreligious dialogue activities in the OSCE region;

- OSCE/ODIHR should offer human rights education training for teachers on hate speech and hate crime and utilize new media tools and platforms to reach wider audiences with this information;
- OSCE/ODIHR should collect good practice examples of interreligious councils in the region and share this with participating States and religious or belief communities.

*Recommendations to religious or belief communities:*

- Religious or belief communities should develop their own theological or philosophical justifications of the right to FoRB and create platforms for dealing with the challenges of advancing FoRB for all;
- Religious or belief communities should promote interreligious solidarity through organized co-operation between religious and life stance communities in national and local communities.

ANNEXES

ANNEX I: AGENDA



**Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**

**FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF:  
ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THE SPECIFIC CHALLENGES OF  
COMBATting ANTI-SEMITISM AND INTOLERANCE AND  
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIANS, MUSLIMS AND  
MEMBERS OF OTHER RELIGIONS**

**22- 23 June 2017  
Hofburg, Vienna**

**AGENDA**

**Day 1                      22 June 2017**

15:00 – 16:00

**OPENING SESSION**

***Opening remarks:***

**Mr. Michael Georg Link**, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR)

**Ambassador Clemens Koja**, Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council, Permanent Representative of Austria to the OSCE

***Keynote speech:***

**Professor Marco Ventura**, Professor of law and religion, University of Siena; member, OSCE/ODIHR Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief

*Technical information* by **Ms. Katarzyna Gardapkhadze**, First Deputy Director, OSCE/ODIHR

16:00 – 18:00 **SESSION I: Freedom of religion or belief, non-discrimination and other human rights and fundamental freedoms as the essential normative basis for peaceful coexistence and security in the OSCE region**

*Introducers:*

**Dr. Susan Kerr**, Europe Advocacy Manager, Christian Solidarity Worldwide

**Mr. Alexandr Klyushev**, Chairperson, Association of Religious Organizations of Kazakhstan

*Moderator:* **Mr Omer Fisher**, Head, Human Rights Department, OSCE/ODIHR

**18:30 – 21:00** Reception hosted by the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship at Volksgarten

**Day 2** **23 June 2017**

09:00 – 10:30 **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**

*Introducers:*

**Ambassador Jean-Christophe Peaucelle**, Advisor for Religious Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France

**Professor Brett Scharffs**, Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University

*Moderator:* **Ms. Stacy Bernard Davis**, Unit Chief for Europe and Eurasia, Office of International Religious Freedom, US Department of State

10:30 – 11:00 Break

11:00 – 12:30 **SESSION III: Challenges of combatting anti-Semitism and intolerance and discrimination against Christians, Muslims and members of other religions**

*Introducers:*

**Professor Ingeborg Gabriel**, Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions

**Rev. Dr. C. Welton Gaddy**, President Emeritus and Senior Advisor of Interfaith Alliance Foundation and Radio Host of "State of Belief" in Washington D.C.

**Dr. Farid Hafez, Political Science** Department at the University of Salzburg

**Moderator: Mr. Larry Olomofe**, Advisor on combatting racism and xenophobia and intolerance against Christians and other groups, OSCE/ODIHR (tbc)

**12:30 – 14:00**

**Lunch break / Side event** (Light lunch hosted by the Austrian Chairmanship, Vorsaal Hofburg)

14:00 – 16:00

**SESSION IV: Interfaith and interreligious dialogue and co-operation and creating the conditions for peaceful and secure societies in the OSCE region**

*Introducers:*

**Ms. Ekaterina Chitanava**, Director of the Tolerance and Diversity Institute, Tbilisi

**Ms. Gabrielle Westhead**, Convenor of the European Interfaith Youth Network; Chairperson, UK Interfaith Youth Network

**Moderator: Dr Kishan Manocha**, Senior Adviser on Freedom of Religion or Belief, OSCE/ODIHR

16:00 – 17:00

**CLOSING SESSION**

Rapports from the working sessions  
Comments from the floor

*Closing remarks*

**Ms. Katarzyna Gardapkhadze**, First Deputy Director, OSCE/ODIHR

**Ambassador Clemens Koja**, Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council, Permanent Representative of Austria to the OSCE

17.00

Closing of the meeting

## ANNEX II: OPENING REMARKS

### *Opening remarks*

**Amb. Clemens Koja**, Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council, Permanent Representative of Austria to the OSCE

Dear Director Link,  
Dear Professor Ventura,  
Dear Ambassadors,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you here today, to this year's first Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting (SHDM), organized together with ODIHR.

Allow me to share with you the Austrian Chairmanship's perspective on the importance of the issues we will be discussing here over the next two days.

Austria has taken over the OSCE Chairmanship at a critical moment. In too many places, we see grave threats to peace and security; including to the detriment of our human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Notably, the right to freedom of religion or belief is increasingly violated, where other human rights are also encroached upon. The level of respect for religious freedom is also a clear indicator for the respect for many other, closely interlinked, human rights: such as freedom of association and assembly, or freedom of expression. The right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, and fostering mutual respect and understanding are among the original tenets of the OSCE. The 1975 Helsinki Final Act states that "*participating States will respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion*" and that "*respect for (these rights and freedoms) is an essential factor for the peace, justice and well-being necessary to ensure the development of friendly relations and co-operation among (...) all States.*"

Austria has identified this fundamental right as one of our Chairmanship priorities in the OSCE human dimension for this year, in order to continue efforts in this area, and to highlight the indispensable contribution of the right to freedom of religion or belief as conducive to promoting sustainable stability and security in our societies.

Additionally, all issues related to the broader topic of tolerance and non-discrimination, including based on religion or belief, also belong to the priorities of the Austrian Chairmanship. This includes the challenges of combatting anti-Semitism and intolerance and discrimination against Christians, Muslims, and members of other religions. Among other endeavours, like previous Chairmanships, Austria has appointed three Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination to foster tolerance and dialogue in support of our Chairmanship agenda. I am glad to welcome that the most recently appointed Prof. Ingeborg Gabriel (Rep. on combating racism, xenophobia, and discrimination, also focusing on intolerance and discrimination against Christians and members of other religions) who has joined us at this meeting, and will be speaking at the third session tomorrow which is entirely dedicated to this matter.

Ladies and gentlemen, Austria is committed to contributing toward helping rebuild trust and confidence between the OSCE participating states as well as citizens' trust in governmental institutions and organisations mandated with safeguarding peace and our shared values.

Building trust requires open and constructive dialogue. Indeed, this includes intra- and interreligious dialogue, as well as the open and transparent dialogue between public authorities and people belonging to religious or belief communities.

We consider dialogue to be the effective instrument to foster respect, co-operation and to lead to a common understanding of these rights and freedoms, in order to strengthening democratic processes and the rule of law. This is an essential part of Austrian foreign policy as well as domestic initiatives. As such, a Task Force on Dialogue of Cultures and Religions was established within the Austrian Foreign Ministry in 2007, charged i.a. with supporting dialogue platforms and interreligious civil society initiatives. This is just one example of various well-established and institutionalised efforts toward interreligious dialogue. We look forward to hearing further positive examples on the crucial role of dialogue and best practice to this end in the fourth session, which is fully dedicated to this matter.

Dear participants,

The aim of this meeting is to provide an opportunity for OSCE participating States, OSCE institutions and executive structures, international organizations, civil society organizations, and religious or belief communities to take stock of our OSCE human dimension commitments in the sphere of freedom of religion or belief and tolerance and non-discrimination, in the wake of current and emerging issues in the region, to clarify and explore the multi-faceted dimensions of this right and its contribution to security, exchange views on good practices, and to offer recommendations.

In addition to the opening and closing sessions, the event will have four working sessions, the topics of which I have just elaborated. I am glad to say that we have a number of remarkable moderators and introducers for these sessions. We also encourage all participants to engage in lively discussions and an open dialogue on the interrelationship between the right to freedom of religion or belief and security, at the backdrop of current and emerging challenges, to share best practices and positive examples in this regard, and to provide concrete recommendations to participating States which we can all learn from and hopefully emulate.

Thank you for your attention and I wish you a fruitful meeting.

*Opening remarks*

**Mr. Michael Georg Link**, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Excellencies,  
Ambassador Koja,  
Distinguished Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the first OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting of 2017 focusing on “Freedom of religion or belief: Issues, Opportunities and the Specific Challenges of Combatting Anti-Semitism and Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians, Muslims and members of other religions”. This is my last human dimension meeting in my capacity as Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and I am particularly delighted that this topic has been chosen because it deals with a question of fundamental, and universal importance – the protection given to our inherent capacity and desire to discover truth for ourselves and to live a life of meaning and purpose built around what we have found, and to express and communicate, socialize and associate on the basis of our diverse self-understanding and conceptions of life. This, in a nutshell, is what freedom of a religion or belief as a human right entails.

This meeting assumes critical importance given the established and emerging challenges to the full and free exercise of the right to freedom of religion or belief by everyone in the OSCE region. I will not dwell in depth on these issues as they have been outlined in the annotated agenda and will no doubt receive further, detailed attention over these two days. But permit me to bring two challenges to your attention, because I believe they pose particularly significant threats to our efforts to build flourishing, open, tolerant and inclusive societies – the true and lasting basis of security in the OSCE region.

One, the view that some religions or beliefs are extraneous to the identity of a people and nation and therefore can endanger social peace and cohesion. This idea is on the rise and can be found in the programmes of a number of nationalist political parties and right wing, populist anti-immigrant movements that are growing in popularity in many parts of the OSCE region. In this view, religious and belief diversity is not a potential source of strength, it is not something to be celebrated, respected and fostered. Rather, suppression of religious and belief diversity is regarded as the primary means of ensuring social peace and so manifestations of a religious faith or non-religious belief systems that are perceived as offensive of national identity and therefore hostile to social cohesion have little or no place in society.

Two, in the interest of exercising political control over society as a whole some governments in the OSCE region have imposed far reaching measures that encroach on freedom of religion or belief. The main concern here is to prevent certain religious or belief communities from enjoying a dynamic, vibrant and independent existence for fear that this might in the long run erode the State's control over society. Indeed, some participating States have gone so far to insist that the exercise of freedom of religion or belief – even of core elements of this human right – requires specific permission from the State, an understanding that goes against the conception of freedom of religion or belief as an inalienable right belonging to everyone, including non-believers, without distinction.

Ladies and Gentlemen, against the backdrop of these and other worrying developments which, if left unchecked, will only serve to undermine the security of our societies, may I ask you to turn your attention to a question of fundamental importance to which we should – indeed, we must – find answers at this important meeting. Namely, how can OSCE participating States provide an open, inclusive space which ensures the full and non-discriminatory implementation of the right to freedom of religion or belief for all?

As you know, we are considering two sets of commitments at this Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting. One pertains to the right to freedom of religion or belief. The other relates to tolerance and non-discrimination. They are overlapping, mutually reinforcing and interrelated commitments. They serve the same ends, namely the peace and security of the OSCE region. They must therefore be taken forward together. We need to bear this in mind as we explore together practical strategies for translating these commitments into a lasting reality. Clearly, only a coherent, integrated approach will ensure the effective implementation of these commitments.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as you know, promoting a sustainable legal and social culture of freedom of religion or belief, tolerance and non-discrimination, mutual respect and understanding is a complex and long-term process. The challenging and sensitive nature of these topics also requires that we take into account different national and regional contexts as well as the increasingly pluralistic societies within the OSCE region characterized by a diversity of religions and beliefs. It also underscores the need to engage all sectors of society – the State, civil society, religious or belief communities, the academy, the media – in a concerted, collaborative and systematic effort to foster a culture of peaceful coexistence born of recognition of living in one shared space with multifaceted identities, interconnections and complexities. Such long-term efforts must be grounded in building relationships among and between these actors.

Communication and dialogue across religious or belief boundaries are key to building and maintaining relationship of trust and meaningful co-operation between people of different faiths and beliefs. Indeed, interfaith and interreligious dialogue is a powerful tool for engendering understanding and preventing or overcoming mistrust between religious or

belief communities. When conducted on an equal footing and in a sustained manner, that is in ways that go beyond mere superficial brief encounters, interfaith and interreligious communication can help replace stereotypes and prejudices by real experiences, engender respect for everyone's freedom of religion or belief, and foster a collective, shared responsibility for the well-being of all. While many promising and inspiring initiatives in this area have emerged over the years – and we will hear about some good practices in this regard tomorrow – we are still far from realising the full potential of interfaith and interreligious dialogue and co-operation for creating the conditions for peaceful and secure societies in the OSCE region. Indeed, this will remain the case unless and until women have equal access to such efforts and young people are more deliberately engaged.

Ladies and Gentlemen, while the focus on interfaith and interreligious dialogue at this meeting is most welcome and necessary and builds on the excellent discussions on this very theme at the last Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting to be dedicated to freedom of religion or belief, we must not lose sight of one essential point. Namely, that the engagement of religious or belief communities in efforts to promote dialogue, co-operation, mutual trust and understanding can never replace the State's duty as the formal guarantor of the right freedom of religion or belief under international law. The State is not just another stakeholder alongside various actors and institutions; its obligations to respect, to protect and to promote freedom of religion or belief for all cannot be assumed by anyone else.

The presence of numerous representatives of civil society organizations and of religious or belief communities at this meeting is a welcome confirmation of the interest within civil society in the areas of freedom of religion or belief and tolerance and non-discrimination.

The high-level participation of representatives of so many governments further underscores its relevance. It also speaks to the potential of this forum – the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting – to serve as an important space for an exchange of views and experiences on national and local policies and practices related to the implementation of OSCE commitments in these important areas.

The agenda of this meeting offers plenty of scope for a full and frank discussion of the issues and challenges facing the OSCE area in relation to promoting freedom of religion or belief and tolerance and non-discrimination. We are fortunate to have with us a number of distinguished speakers whose insights will no doubt greatly enrich our conversation and serve as a stimulus to clear thinking and analysis on our part. As we explore the practical steps that need to be taken to secure the right to freedom of religion or belief for all and intensify efforts to foster tolerance and non-discrimination, please be assured of ODIHR's ongoing support and assistance to ensure the realization of these important objectives.

Thank you for your attention.

### **ANNEX III: CLOSING REMARKS**

#### *Closing remarks*

**Amb. Clemens Koja**, Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council, Permanent Representative of Austria to the OSCE

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank you all for coming to the first Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting under the Austrian Chairmanship and for your active participation and constructive exchange of views.

Over the last two days we have heard from our introducers and from all of you about the many challenges we still face across the OSCE region in the area of freedom of religion or belief and on the specific challenges of combatting anti-Semitism and intolerance and discrimination against Christians, Muslims, and members of other religions.

We have also heard a number of concrete recommendations focused on strengthening these rights and ways to ensure a better implementation of our existing OSCE commitments.

Despite many challenges and different views expressed during the discussions, this Meeting has been an extremely valuable opportunity for all of our participating States to remind ourselves of the several OSCE commitments on Freedom of Religion or Belief as well as on Tolerance and Non-discrimination, as well as the pressing need for us to think creatively about ways to meaningfully respect and translate these commitments into action, respecting, in particular, the universality of the right to freedom of religion or belief.

As was also stated in our opening remarks, the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to freedom of religion or belief, on a national level as well as internationally, plays an important role for Austria. There is a clear understanding that special attention must be given to the fight against racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and related intolerance, and Austria remains fully committed to this fight.

Despite having a strong legal system in place, which enables authorities and courts to combat right-wing extremism, xenophobic, anti-Semitic and racist acts; we are also aware that racist prejudices, attitudes, and acts still exist, and that sustainable and differentiated policies are necessary in order to counteract these phenomena in the long-term.

Part of the role of any Chairmanship is to bear higher levels of scrutiny, and to lead by example. Therefore, and like previous OSCE Chairmanships, Austria has taken this opportunity to commit to a voluntary self-evaluation of its implementation of the OSCE human dimension commitments, including in the area of “hate crimes, religious tolerance, and extremism”. We look forward to the conclusions and recommendations of this evaluation which will be thoroughly assessed and feed onto our future activities.

I also take this opportunity to thank the many civil society organisations, including those that have taken the floor today, for their input in this process. Your input and the data being collected are important to drive policies in this regard and strengthen efforts already under way, such as training of security forces.

Once again, a big thank you to all speakers and participants for the concrete recommendations and practical proposals focused at strengthening the right to freedom of religion or belief across the whole OSCE region. And thank you also to our moderators for summarising the conclusions of this Meeting.

Our intention is to follow-up on these outcomes and builds on them in our future work on these issues. I want to underline that this is a joint effort. We as the Chairmanship are fully committed to enhancing our continued dialogue on these issues. As such, we will do our part in providing such platforms for all participating States, at the same time we encourage all 57 participating States to work together towards a deepened understanding of each other's perspectives and our common shared values.

Finally, I would like to thank ODIHR, and their outstanding team for making this Meeting a success. And for their tireless efforts in assisting us all (the participating States) with upholding our commitments on freedom of religion or belief, tolerance and non-discrimination, and dialogue.

Thank you also to the interpreters, who have ensured our dialogue sans linguistique frontiers over the last two days.

*Closing remarks*

**Ms. Katarzyna Gardapkhadze**, First Deputy Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In closing the first Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting of this year, let me offer some reflections on the topics we discussed.

A theme common at this meeting has been that of collaboration and partnership. The work of advancing freedom of religion or belief and combatting all forms of intolerance and discrimination on grounds of religion or belief requires concerted, collaborative, systematic efforts on the part of a range of key actors. However important and necessary, legal mechanisms alone will not generate the commitment and mutual understanding required to sustain a culture of respect for freedom of conscience, thought, religion or belief and for the dignity of each and every human being, a culture of peaceful coexistence in our societies. The role of civil society, and particularly religious and belief communities, as partners in these processes cannot be overstated.

You have come forward with a number of concrete recommendations and practical strategies to secure the right to freedom of religion or belief for all in the OSCE area, and to address the specific challenges of combatting anti-Semitism and intolerance and discrimination against Christians, Muslims and members of other religions. During these two days, I have also heard critical voices. They reminded us of the gap between aspirations and reality. They spoke of how decisive political will is, and how often it is lacking.

ODIHR will continue to assist, provide expertise and share experience. But let us not forget that the recommendations emerging from this SHDM will remain fine words on paper so long as action on the part of participating States continues to fall short of their commitments. It has been made clear throughout this meeting that OSCE commitments must remain our common reference point, and their full implementation must remain our common goal. Ladies and Gentlemen, now is not the time to walk away from the universal values enshrined in OSCE commitments. I very much hope that we will take to heart an important point that has been underlined at this meeting: that the best way in which participating States can promote freedom of religion or belief, mutual respect and understanding among people of different religious and belief backgrounds, and promote and facilitate interreligious and interfaith dialogue, is by implementing the full range of their human dimension commitments.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to express my personal gratitude to a number of people who have been instrumental in organizing this Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting. I would like to thank Ambassador Clements Koja for his thoughtful remarks, and the distinguished introducers for their excellent, insightful presentations which gave us much food for thought and stimulated wide-ranging discussions. I am grateful to the moderators for their skilful facilitation of the working sessions, and to the interpreters who, as always, did an excellent job.

I would also like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks to the Austrian Chairmanship for their continuous support and collaboration, and to my excellent team at ODIHR who worked very hard to bring together the varied elements that made up this SHDM into a coherent whole.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Too often, religion or belief is presented as a force that sows divisions between people. But just a week ago, 22 world's most prominent religious leaders have come together to present a different vision of religion or belief. Leaders from Christian, Muslim, Jewish and other faiths, including Pope Francis and Dalai Lama, issued a joint appeal asking people to follow a simple advice: to make friends with people of other faiths. In this rare yet tremendously important appeal, we hear that "We don't deal with differences by pretending they don't exist. We deal with them by building relationships."

With these words I turn to you, Ladies and Gentlemen, representatives of participating States, international organizations, civil society, religious or belief communities who participated in and contributed to this meeting. You are a living proof that people throughout the vast expanse of the OSCE area can meet and act together on the basis of their very diverse beliefs and convictions. Let us continue acting together so we can balance attitudes of fear and ignorance by the recognition of common hopes and aspirations, honouring and respecting the dignity of every person in the OSCE region.

Thank you very much.

**ANNEX IV: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION: Speakers, Introducers and Moderators**



**Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**

**FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF:  
ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THE SPECIFIC CHALLENGES OF  
COMBATting ANTI-SEMITISM AND INTOLERANCE AND  
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIANS, MUSLIMS AND  
MEMBERS OF OTHER RELIGIONS**

**22-23 June 2017  
Hofburg, Vienna**

**Biographical Information:  
Keynote Speaker, Introducers and Moderators**

**Day 1: Thursday, 22 June 2017**

**15.00 – 16.00: OPENING SESSION**

*Opening remarks:* **Mr. Michael Georg Link**, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Mr. Michael Georg Link (Germany) began his tenure as ODIHR director on 1 July 2014. Before joining the Office, he served from January 2012 to December 2014 as the Minister of State for Europe in the German government, responsible for OSCE, EU, Council of Europe and NATO affairs. He was elected to the German parliament in 2005, representing Heilbronn/Baden-Württemberg, and served through 2013. During that term, from 2006 to 2013, Link established a strong OSCE connection as a member of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. The ODIHR director is a past member of the boards of the Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF), the German Foundation for Peace Research and the Foundation for German-Polish Co-operation, and remains active in international NGOs, including the German Council on Foreign Relations, the German Association for Eastern European Studies, the Southeast Europe Association, and the German Atlantic Association.

*Opening remarks:* **Amb. Clemens Koja**, Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council, Permanent Representative of Austria to the OSCE

Ambassador Clemens Koja was born on 19 July 1960 in Vienna. Raised and educated in Vienna and later in Salzburg, where he finished a classical gymnasium in 1978, he served in the Austrian army as a reserve officer. From 1979 -1983 Koja studied law at the Universities of Salzburg and Vienna, obtaining a Dr.iur. In the following years he studied Catholic theology in Rome and Salzburg, obtaining a Master's degree in 1993. In 1989 he joined the Austrian Foreign Service; his first postings abroad were at the Austrian Embassies in Warsaw, Rome and the Vatican. In the Foreign Ministry he worked mostly in the Southern European Department, of which he was the Director between 2003 and 2008. Later he served as Deputy Head of Mission in Madrid and as Ambassador in Belgrade (2008-12) and Ljubljana (2012-16). Since 6 July 2016 he is the Permanent Representative of Austria to the OSCE.

*Keynote Speech:* **Prof. Marco Ventura**, Professor of law and religion, University of Sienna; member, OSCE/ODIHR Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief

Prof. Marco Ventura is a professor of law and religion at the Law Department of the University of Siena. He is also the Director of the Center for Religious Studies at Fondazione Bruno Kessler of Trento. He is an associate researcher at the Center Droit, Religion, Entreprise et Société of the University of Strasbourg and CNRS and a visiting professor at the University of Luxembourg within the European governance programme. In 2016, Professor Ventura was appointed to the ODIHR Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief for a three-year term. Professor Ventura has visited the universities of London (UCL), Oxford, Strasbourg, Brussels (ULB), the Centro de Formação Jurídica e Judiciária of Macau, the Indian Law Institute in Delhi, the University of Cape Town, Al Akhawayn University in Morocco and the Peking University in Beijing. From 2012 to 2015 he was a professor of canon law and law and religion at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Belgium). From 2013 to 2015, he visited Vietnam as an expert in the dialogue between the European Union and the Vietnamese Committee on Religious Affairs. Professor Ventura received a PhD in law and religion at the University of Strasbourg.

**16:00 – 18:00**      **SESSION I: Freedom of Religion or belief, non-discrimination and other human rights and fundamental freedoms as the essential normative basis for peaceful coexistence and security in the OSCE region**

*Introducer:* **Dr. Susan Kerr**, Europe Advocacy Manager, Christian Solidarity Worldwide

Dr. Susan Kerr works as Europe Team Leader for the human rights organisation Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), advocating for the human right of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for people of all faiths or none. Since 2014, she has also been a member of the Board of Coordinators of the European Platform against Religious Intolerance and Discrimination (EPRID), which brings together different confessional and non-confessional organisations to improve knowledge and understanding of FoRB and to offer policy recommendations vis-à-vis international institutions. Susan is also a member of the Board of Experts of the Conscience and Liberty Journal. Prior to joining CSW, Susan worked in

various roles in the European Parliament and at the International School of Protocol and Diplomacy. Susan holds a PhD in Peace Studies from the University of Bradford and MA degrees from the Free University of Brussels (ULB) in International Politics and the University of Edinburgh in Modern Languages and EU Studies.

**Introducer: Mr. Alexander Klyushev, Chairperson, Association of Religious Organizations of Kazakhstan**

Mr. Alexander Klyushev is a member of the Expert Board within the office of the Commissioner for Human Rights in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Before 2016, he was a member of the Council for coordination and co-operation with NGOs under the Ministry of Justice. In his capacity as Chairman of the Religious Communities Association (AROK), a post he has held since 2001, he has extensive experience of freedom of religion or belief issues in Kazakhstan and in the wider Central Asian region, particularly in the sphere of legislation, monitoring of violations and the advancement of international standards and OSCE commitments on freedom of religion or belief and related human rights.

**Moderator: Mr. Omer Fisher, Head Human Rights Department, OSCE/ODIHR**

Mr. Omer Fisher joined OSCE/ODIHR in 2010 as Human Rights Advisor, working mainly on freedom of peaceful assembly. He is the Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Human Rights Department. Between 2003 and 2010 he worked at the International Secretariat of Amnesty International in London as Researcher on the Balkans and as Senior Research Policy Advisor. Omer Fisher holds a PhD in Politics from the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK, and a degree in Economics from Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

<b>Day 2: Friday, 23 June 2017</b>
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**9:00 – 10:30**      **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**

**Introducer: Amb. Jean-Christophe Peaucelle, Advisor for Religious Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, France**

Ambassador Jean-Christophe Peaucelle is a career diplomat. Since 2014, he has been Adviser for Religious Affairs at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Prior to that, he was Ambassador to Qatar (2011-2014), Deputy Director of North Africa and the Middle East (2009-2011), diplomatic counsellor to the Minister (2008-2009), Head of European Affairs to the Ministry of Immigration (2007-2008) and Deputy Director of Economic and Financial Affairs. His postings also include Istanbul (where he served as Consul General from 2003 to 2007), Jerusalem and Tehran.

*Introducer: Prof. Brett Scharffs*, Director, international Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University

Prof. Brett G. Scharffs is the Director of the International Center for Law and Religion Studies and has just been appointed as the Rex E. Lee Chair of Law at Brigham Young University Law School. For the past decade he has been a visiting professor at Central European University in Budapest, where he teaches comparative law and religion. He has also helped organize advanced academic training programs on religion and the rule of law in China, Vietnam, and Myanmar, as well as programs on Islamic Sharia law and human rights at several universities in Indonesia. Professor Scharffs is a graduate of Georgetown University, where he received a B.S.B.A in international business and an M.A. in philosophy. He was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University, where he earned a B.Phil. in philosophy. He received his J.D. from Yale Law School, where he was Senior Editor of the Yale Law Journal. He has written more than 100 articles and book chapters.

*Moderator: Ms. Stacy Bernard Davis*, Unit Chief for Europe and Eurasia, Office of International Religious Freedom, US Department of State

Ms. Stacy Bernard Davis is the Unit Chief for Europe and Eurasia in the Office of International Religious Freedom in the United States Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. She supports the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom and works closely with the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism (SEAS) to advance US foreign policy to promote religious freedom and combat religious discrimination in Europe. Prior to taking this position, Ms. Davis was the senior advisor to the SEAS for two years and before that, she was the Public Engagement Officer in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs Office of Weapons Removal. She has a Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy from The Fletcher School.

**11:00 - 12:30**     **SESSION III: Challenges of combating anti-Semitism and intolerance and discrimination against Christians, Muslims and members of other religions**

*Introducer: Prof. Ingeborg Gabriel*, Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions

Prof. Ingeborg Gabriel was appointed as the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination in 2017. Her role also focuses on combating intolerance and discrimination against Christians and other religious faiths. Since the 1980s, she has been active in encouraging interreligious dialogue, both at an academic and diplomatic level: serving as the director of the Austrian Justice and Peace Commission and co-founding the Vienna Christian-Islamic Summer University in 2006. She is a professor of Social Ethics at the University of Vienna, Austria, serving in the

Faculty of Catholic Theology since 1997. She holds a Master's degree in Economics and International Relations from the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna. She has previously worked for the United Nations Development Programme in New York for the nations of Nepal and Mongolia.

*Introducer:* **Dr. C. Welton Gaddy**, President Emeritus and Senior Advisor of Interfaith Alliance Foundation and Radio Host of "State of Belief" in Washington D.C.

Rev. Dr. C. Welton Gaddy, President Emeritus of Interfaith Alliance, a national organization that deals with the intersection of religion, politics, and government with a focus on religious liberty and Pastor Emeritus of Northminster Church in Monroe, LA, where he served as senior pastor for almost 25 years, is recognized as a leading advocate for protecting the boundaries between religion and government. Among his present duties, he hosts the national radio show *State of Belief*, serves as Senior Adviser for Interfaith Alliance, and works as a member of the Advisory Committee for the Council on Foreign Relations. Dr. Gaddy's past leadership roles include President of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, President of the Alliance of Baptists, member of the World Economic Forum's Council of 1999, and member of President Obama's Working Group on the constitutionality of the Faith-Based and Community Office in the White House. Dr. Gaddy has received the Sikh American legal Defense and Education Fund's "The Dorothy Height Coalition Building Award," the American Humanist Association's Humanist Religious Freedom Award," the Hindu American Foundation's "Mahatma Gandhi Award for the Advancement of Religious Pluralism," Interfaith Alliance's "Walter Cronkite Faith & Freedom Award," and Muslim Advocates "Voice of Courage Award." He is also the author of more than 20 books. Gaddy received his PhD from Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

*Introducer:* **Mr. Farid Hafez**, Political Science Department at the University of Salzburg

Mr. Farid Hafez is a researcher at the Department of Political Science at the University of Salzburg. Hafez has taught at a number of universities in the world. In 2014, he was a visiting scholar at Columbia University. Currently, he is Fulbright Professor at University of California, Berkeley. Hafez is the founder and editor of the 2010 founded German Islamophobia Studies Yearbook. Since 2015, he is co-editor of the European Islamophobia Report. In 2009 he was awarded with the Bruno-Kreisky-Award for the political book of the year for his German anthology Islamophobia in Austria (edited with Prof. John Bunzl). He has more than 40 publications. His latest publication includes From the Far Right to the Mainstream: Islamophobia, Party Politics and the Media (2012, edited with Humayun Ansari). Currently, his research focuses on Muslim youth movements in Europe. He earned his Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Vienna.

*Moderator:* **Mr. Larry Olomofe**, Advisor on combatting racism and Xenophobia and intolerance against Christians and other groups

Mr. Larry Olomofe runs the portfolio on racism and xenophobia and intolerance against Christians and other religions, providing advice to various participating States and other stakeholders on issues such as intolerance against Christians, racism, xenophobia, discrimination, hate incidents and hate crimes across the OSCE region. He also co-ordinates and provides trainings for law enforcement, Prosecutors, judges, and civil society organisations on responding to and prevention of hate crimes and European and domestic anti-discrimination law across the OSCE region. Prior to his OSCE work, Larry Olomofe was employed as the Human Rights Education Director and Trainer at the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) in Budapest, Hungary, and was an associate professor offering courses on nationalism, social theory, race and racism, political science and international human rights at the Universities of San Francisco, Budapest, Pecs, and the Institute for Social and European Studies in Szombathely, Hungary. He has also written a series of articles on the topics of Roma Rights, Race and Racism, Hate Crimes, cultural theories of race and ethnicity and modern identities, and contemporary human rights education and development issues/challenges.

**14:00 – 16:00      SESSION IV: Interfaith and interreligious dialogue and co-operation and creating the conditions for peaceful and secure societies in the OSCE region**

*Introducer:* **Ms. Ekaterina Chitanava**, Director of the Tolerance and Diversity Institute, Tbilisi

Ms. Eka Chitanava is a human rights activist and an executive director of a non-governmental organization, Tolerance and Diversity Institute (TDI), based in Tbilisi, Georgia. Her work is focused on freedom of religion and belief and minority rights. The organization is providing free legal aid to people experiencing discrimination on religious, ethnic and/or racial grounds in Georgia, as well as conducting various awareness-raising activities about tolerance, state policy research, legal analysis and sociological studies. From 2009 to 2011 Ms. Chitanava, as a journalist, was regularly writing for Georgian analytical magazines and international outlets. She was also producing short documentaries about religious and ethnic minorities in Georgia for the Tolerance Centre under the auspices of Public Defender. Currently she is contributing to the Forum 18 News Service as well as different international media outlets and academic journals. Ms. Chitanava holds degrees in Social Studies from Tbilisi State University, in Journalism and Media Management from Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA) and in Social Anthropology from Central European University (Budapest, Hungary).

*Introducer:* **Ms. Gabrielle Westhead**, Convenor of the European Interfaith Youth Network; Chairperson, UK Interfaith Youth Network

Ms. Gabrielle Westhead is 23 years old and is from the UK. Gabrielle is a Buddhist and actively started practising Buddhism when she was 15, 9 years ago. She practices Buddhism within SGI-UK, the UK branch of Soka Gakkai International, a socially engaged Buddhist movement based on the teachings of the 13th century Buddhist teacher Nichiren. SGI-UK promotes inner change sparked by Buddhist practice, leading to individuals contributing to

peace, culture and education and creating a better world. Within her organisation, Gabrielle currently supports the young women students who are also members of SGI-UK as the National Young Women's Student Division Leader. She also takes part in anti-nuclear and peace activities within SGI-UK. Gabrielle was appointed to the executive committee of Religions for Peace European Interfaith Youth Network in November 2015 and has been active on a local and European level ever since. This has enabled her to become an advocate of youth engagement, interfaith dialogue and global citizenship.

*Moderator:* **Dr. Kishan Manocha**, Senior Adviser on Freedom of Religion or Belief, OSCE/ODIHR

Dr. Kishan Manocha has extensive experience in religious freedom and minority rights issues in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia as an advocate, researcher, trainer and consultant to a number of international and non-governmental organisations. He is currently Senior Adviser on Freedom of Religion or Belief at the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in Warsaw. Immediately before that, he served as Director of the Office of Public Affairs of the Baha'i community of the United Kingdom. Kishan holds degrees in medicine and law from the Universities of London and Cambridge respectively. He first trained in psychiatry, completing a Research Fellowship in Forensic Psychiatry at the University of Oxford, before studying law. He specialised in international criminal and international human rights law for his LLM and practised as a barrister where he was involved in a number of international criminal law cases before the English courts. He has also worked as a human rights adviser at the Commonwealth Secretariat in London and at the Special Court for Sierra Leone and has been a Visiting Research Fellow at the Carr Centre for Human Rights at Harvard as well as a Fellow of the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies at Concordia University in Montreal. He has lectured in constitutional law, international human rights law, and public international law at universities in the United Kingdom and Pakistan, and is a Research Fellow at the Religious Freedom and Business Foundation and a Professional Associate at the Centre for Law and Religion at Cardiff University.

## **16:00 -17:00      CLOSING SESSION**

*Closing remarks:*      **Ms. Katarzyna Gardapkhadze**, First Deputy Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Ms. Katarzyna Gardapkhadze, the First Deputy Director of ODIHR is responsible managing the operations of the ODIHR, overseeing the preparation, co-ordination and implementation of the activities of the Election, Democratization, Human Rights, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Programmes and of the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues, as well as formulation of the ODIHR public message. MS. Gardapkhadze is an expert in management, strategic planning and capacity building, with thematic expertise in human and children rights and social welfare, and more than 20 years of professional experience from Poland, the United States, Western Balkans, South Caucasus and Central Asia. Prior to her current appointment, she was the Head of ODIHR's Human Rights Department, and had earlier supported setting up ODIHR civil society program in Ukraine and developing and

institutionalizing a system of project monitoring and evaluation in the Office. Trained in conflict resolution and mediation, in 2003-2011, Ms. Gardapkhadze served as the director of conflict resolution, human rights and child/social welfare reform programs in the South Caucasus, with advisory and capacity building roles in similar programs in Central Asia. In 2000 – 2002, she led programs focused on human rights, minorities and inter-ethnic dialogue in Western Balkans. Fluent in Polish, English and Russian, Ms. Gardapkhadze holds a Master's Degree in social sciences.