



HOLY SEE

2006 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Working Session 16

*Promotion of Tolerance and Non Discrimination,
and Mutual Respect and Understanding*

Mr. Moderator,

1. The diverse ethnic, cultural and religious makeup of the participating States makes of this Organization a laboratory of potentially effective and lasting inter-cultural, inter-religious and inter-ethnic partnerships. Today this has become ever more important: besides attempts to provoke a clash *of* civilizations, at times there seems to be also an on-going clash *about* civilization, that is about the elements that should constitute a civilization.
2. No partnership among cultures, religions and ethnic identities can be established without mutual knowledge. Creating a partnership requires dialogue. However, dialogue is only the first step, which should lead to identifying a common and solid “ground” upon which a lasting partnership can be established. This common ground should consist in respect and appreciation for religion and culture. Today, religions are all too often manipulated or even misunderstood as part of the problem, when, in fact, they are and should be considered part of the solution to problems that exist between different cultures and civilizations.
3. Consequently, the OSCE should promote responsibility and sensitivity in dealing with religious and cross-cultural issues and, in doing so, this Organization could build upon the invitation of His Holiness Benedict XVI not to consider the mockery of the sacred a right of freedom. *A reason which is deaf to the divine and which relegates religion to the realm of subcultures is incapable of entering into the dialogue of cultures (Lecture in the University of Regensburg, 12 September 2006).* Deeply religious cultures consider this exclusion of religion from the universality of reason an attack against their innermost convictions.

Pope Benedict XVI also emphasized that religion should not be combined with violence, but with reason. In this perspective, the OSCE should continue to ensure that religions are not instrumentalised by those who pursue a strategy of tension.

Finally, the educational system and the media have a particular responsibility to avoid stereotypes, distortions, attitudes of intolerance and the frequent belittling of religion and culture. This is an important task for the OSCE. Even more so, if the

media, civic and political debates or the educational system give little value to religions or present them using prejudice or disdainful language. Religions are no longer able to effectively work against stereotypes, if they themselves are victims of them.

Mr. Moderator,

4. With reference to the initiatives undertaken by the OSCE and ODIHR to promote tolerance and respect, I would finally like to present some Recommendations.

a. The Tolerance and non-Discrimination programme of ODIHR should pay more effective attention to the implementation of the specific OSCE commitment to fight against prejudice, intolerance and discrimination against Christians and members of other religions; this applies too in the context of education as a means to promote respect and understanding and in the work of ODIHR related to *Challenges and Responses to Hate –Motivated Incidents*.

Awareness and due recognition of an increasing bias and at times hostility against Christians and their religion should be pointed out, in everyone's interest. In fact, all religions are at risk as long as any one of them is the victim of stereotype or prejudice.

b. In the fight against discrimination and intolerance, the ODIHR action should stay within the agreed language of the Organization and therefore avoid to extend that action to issues where there is no consensus between participating States.

c. The Holy See would also welcome further suggestions of the CiO Representative on Discrimination and Intolerance, with a special focus on Discrimination and Intolerance against Christians and members of other Religions. After 2 years of work, it is time to formulate practical ideas on how to address intolerance and discrimination against Christians, since is at the heart of her mandate and is strongly connected to the *raison d'être* of her presence in the OSCE.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.