

**Statement by the Representative of the Moscow Patriarchate at the
Supplementary OSCE human dimension meeting on freedom
religion or belief**

Session II: Status of Religious or Belief Communities

Vienna, 9-10 July, 2009

The Russian Orthodox Church considers the OSCE work in the sphere of freedom of religion and beliefs very important. We believe that the work is aimed at better securing of believers' and faith communities' rights they have both in private and in public sphere.

Our representatives regularly take part in OSCE meetings, participate in ODIHR freedom of religion and beliefs expert group. We hope to contribute in construction in OSCE area of such relations in the sphere of religious freedom that will not restricts religious freedom particularly in public space, but will constitute a basis for peaceful coexistence in mutual respect of the believers who adhere to different communities. Sometimes, it is said in the OSCE that secularism is the best basis for such relations. But we, as well as representatives of many other traditional communities of Europe, is sure that it is not so.

Nowadays, we face situation when concept of secularity is used to deprive people of their rights to openly demonstrate cross or other religious symbols, condemn and criticize such actions that are considered to be sinful in their faith. For instance, call homosexuality a sin.

That neither stimulates understanding in society, nor secures freedom of conscience but impose secularism as new ideology like militant atheism which is to be blamed for murders of millions of believers. We call for the OSCE to rethink secularism as neutral basis for people who adhere to different beliefs.

The OSCE countries are challenged by multireligious society where intercivilizational strains tend to appear. The OSCE tries to react promoting secularism as the only answer to the challenge. But the answer is not accepted by the believers and proves its ineffectiveness in practice.

It makes us conclude that religious freedom and interreligious dialogue should become spheres of cooperation not only among the OSCE states but involve religious communities. The OSCE is expected to turn from organization dealing mostly with religious freedom violations in different countries to organization that, having consulted with religious communities, will present to the world a model of peaceful coexistence in interreligious sphere.

The ambitious aim can only be achieved by institutionalization of dialogue between religious communities and the OSCE. Such a dialogue would make religious communities equal partners of the OSCE, which, would together with organization, could handle the problems appearing in the sphere of religious freedom. Moreover, within such dialogue religious communities would utilize their potential in the sphere of peacemaking and post conflict resolution which remains undemanded by international community.

We are sure that such dialogue has future.