



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE HOLY SEE  
TO THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY  
AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

**STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE,  
AS DELIVERED BY MSGR. MARINKO ANTOLOVIĆ  
AT THE 970<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

**7 NOVEMBER 2013**

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

Mr. Chairman,

The Delegation of the Holy See joins the previous speakers in warmly welcoming back to the Permanent Council the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Ambassador Janez Lenarčič, and thanks him for his report on the 2013 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, recently held in Warsaw.

My Delegation has listened with interest to the reflections of Ambassador Lenarčič on the dynamics of the interventions at the recent HDIM and, in particular, to his comments on the sessions with the highest numbers of interventions.

We have noted that among the most popular sessions of the 2013 HDIM were those on tolerance and non-discrimination. The popularity of these sessions undoubtedly testifies to the significance which the OSCE attaches to the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination in those areas where participating States have reached agreement, even though there were also those who spoke on certain issues that do not enjoy consensus among the participating States. In this context my Delegation wishes to stress that agreed commitments should not remain mere theoretical guidelines. They are, in reality, inspiring principles both for the OSCE and for the activities of the ODIHR and, at the same time, they set clear boundaries which must be respected to guarantee the effectiveness and the “value added” approach in the area of the defense of human rights.

Mr. Chairman,

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

The number of participants and interventions during the special day dedicated to freedom of religion or belief are clear indicators of the interest and importance which the OSCE, participating States and civil society attach to freedom of religion. In fact, in a world that is drawing ever closer together, the question about the meeting of religions and cultures has become one of the most important subjects, and one that is certainly not just the business of theology, but has also moved up to become a political and security theme of the first rank. Every violation of religious freedom, whether evident or hidden, does fundamental damage to the cause of peace and security. Recognition of the religious dimension must be strengthened if we are to create the conditions for peace, development, cooperation, and guarantee human rights for future generations. It has ultimately become a question about how we relate to one another peacefully and how we contribute to the education of the human race.

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

Other areas of particular interest for the Holy See at the 2013 HDIM were: freedom of the media; human rights education; migrant workers; national minorities; Roma and Sinti; and the fight against trafficking in human beings. We are grateful for the opportunity to reflect on these important consensual issues with other participating States.

In conclusion, I would like to assure the Director of the ODIHR of the co-operation of the Delegation of the Holy See and wishes him for every success as he continues to carry out the mandate entrusted to him by the participating States.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman!