



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

**STATEMENT BY MONSIGNOR MICHAEL W. BANACH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HOLY SEE,
AT THE 933rd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

29 NOVEMBER 2012

**RE: ADDRESS BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE
ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION,
H.E. MR. EKMELEDDIN İHSANOĞLU**

Thank you, Mister Chairperson.

1. The Delegation of the Holy See joins previous speakers in warmly welcoming H.E. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, to the Permanent Council and thanks him not only for his visit, but also for his remarks. *As-salámu ‘aláikum!*

2. My Delegation would like to stress the esteem and the profound respect that Catholics and Christians have for Muslim believers by recalling the words of the Second Vatican Council Document Nostra Aetate: “*The Church looks upon Muslims with respect. They worship the one God, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to humanity and to whose decrees, even the hidden ones, they seek to submit themselves wholeheartedly, just as Abraham, to whom the Islamic faith readily relates itself, submitted to God*” (n. 3).

The strengthening of bridges of friendship with the adherents of all religions is a priority for the Catholic Church. In this spirit, the Holy See has repeatedly emphasized its commitment to developing further a sincere and respectful dialogue with the Muslim communities, based on ever more authentic reciprocal knowledge which recognizes the religious values that we have in common and, with loyalty, respects the differences.

3. In this regard, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Centre for Interreligious Dialogue of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization recently held their Eighth Colloquium in Rome dedicated to the theme: “Catholic and Muslim Cooperation in promoting justice in the contemporary world”. The Colloquium took place in a friendly atmosphere. Both sides expressed their awareness of and concern for current challenges, including the economic crisis, the environmental issue, the weakening of the family as a basic institution of society and threats to world peace. Some of the themes that the participants, recognising both areas of commonality and difference, stressed were the following:

- recognition of, and respect for, freedom of conscience, *inter alia*, are conditions of justice in our societies
- the responsibility of religious leaders, institutions and, indeed, every believer to denounce injustice and oppression and to promote justice all around the world
- the belief that our religions possess resources which can inspire people to work to make justice and peace a reality
- the demand that, for the sake of the promotion of justice in today’s world, Christians and Muslims continue to deepen their understanding of one another through ongoing dialogue and cooperation and
- the need to take the fruits of the meeting and communicate them to the people of our respective communities and societies so that they can have a real effect in the world.

These are challenges that must be courageously and resolutely faced.

4. In his Message for the End of Ramadan 2012, the President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, encouraged “*young Muslim and Christian...to cultivate truth and freedom, in order to be genuine heralds of justice and peace and builders of a culture which respects the dignity and the rights of every citizen...[inviting] them to have patience and tenacity necessary for realizing these ideals, never resorting to doubtful compromises, deceptive short-cuts or to means which show little respect for the human person. Only men and women sincerely convinced of these exigencies will be able to build societies where justice and peace will become realities.*”

May our families and communities nurture the desire of being instruments of justice and peace!

Thank you, Mister Chairperson.