



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 937th (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 JANUARY 2013

**RE: ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE OF THE OSCE,
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF UKRAINE,
H.E. MR. LEONID KOZHARA**

Mister Chairman!

1. The Holy See joins other Delegations in warmly welcoming to the Permanent Council H.E. Mr. Leonid Kozhara, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, and congratulates him on the assumption of his duties as 2013 Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE. Congratulations also to you, Ambassador Prokopchuk, and to your Vienna team!

2. In assuming the 2013 Chairmanship, Ukraine brings to the OSCE the wealth of its long and rich history and experience. History has recorded the names of three Popes who have set foot on Ukrainian soil: Saint Clement I at the end of the first century, Saint Martin I in the mid-seventh, and Blessed John Paul II at the beginning of this century. Down the centuries, the Ukrainian people has known harsh and exhausting trials. There have been the scourge of the two World Wars, the recurring famines, the disastrous natural calamities, the oppression of totalitarian regimes when the people risked losing its national, cultural and religious identity. Most recently, there was the radioactive accident at Chernobyl, with its tragic and pitiless consequences for the environment and the lives of so many human beings. That event, which led Ukraine to repudiate nuclear weapons, also brought its citizens to a vigorous re-awakening, inspiring them to set out on the road to a brave renewal. The experience of your country clearly shows that reaching the goals of justice in the political, economic and

social fields requires that religious convictions and fervour be not separated from a moral and social conscience.

Mister Chairman!

3. At the beginning of a new year in the OSCE, the Holy See would like to reiterate the importance of building upon the principles contained in Helsinki Final Act and in other consensually agreed OSCE documents. They form a unique set of tools that are still valid for addressing current security challenges, as well as for the consolidation and preservation of peace and of how to face today's challenges in order to enable present and future generations to live in harmony and security. In this context, the defense of fundamental freedoms and human rights deserves due attention in the context of the Helsinki + 40 discussions. Indeed, the true interest of nations cannot be thought of solely in terms of political strategy, military strength or economic development. Social unity, above and beyond political models and economic diversity, cannot be achieved without respect for the primary values of justice, peace and the dignity of the human person. As Pope Benedict XVI has recently stated: *"The building of peace always comes about by the protection of human beings and their fundamental rights. This task, even if carried out in many ways and with varying degrees of intensity, challenges all countries and must constantly be inspired by the transcendent dignity of the human person and the principles inscribed in human nature"* (New Year's Address to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, January 7, 2013).

4. Human rights, in fact, lie at the origin and basis of international life. The most fundamental of these is the right to life and to live in dignity; the right to a natural family, the primary cell of society and driving principle of public life; and the right to freedom of religion, to which the Holy See attaches great importance. As freedom of religion is truly of primary importance in the world today, my Delegation is glad to see it included among Ukraine's priorities for action. In fact, Pope Benedict XVI, in his recent 2013 New Year's Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, called attention to the respect for religious freedom: *"Peace in society is also put at risk by certain threats to religious liberty: it is a question sometimes of the marginalization of religion in social life; sometimes of intolerance or even of violence towards individuals, symbols of religious identity and religious institutions. It even happens that believers, and Christians in particular, are prevented from contributing to the common good by their educational and charitable institutions. In order effectively to safeguard the exercise of religious liberty it is essential to respect the right of conscientious objection....[O]utlawing individual and institutional conscientious objection in the name of liberty and*

pluralism paradoxically opens by contrast the door to intolerance and forced uniformity”.

In this context, the Holy See is convinced that the international community must fight intolerance and discrimination, as well as hate incidents and crimes against Christians with the same determination as it would fight hatred against members of other religious communities. To this end, the Holy See hopes to be able to promote, under the leadership of the Ukrainian Chairman-in-Office and its respective Personal Representative, the OSCE commitments on discrimination of Christians, which remain a high priority for my Delegation this year.

5. In conclusion, Mister Chairman, as Ukraine assumes the Chairmanship of the OSCE, my Delegation is pleased to offer good wishes for your country's period in office. In a famous verse, your great poet Taras Shevchenko expressed the wish for a time when: “. . . *enemies will be no more, but there will be the child, there will be the mother, there will be people on the earth!*” (cf. *I Arkhimed i Halilei*). As your country embarks on the year-long endeavor of contributing to the building of the security community stretching “from Vancouver to Vladivostok,” I assure you of my Delegation's desire to cooperate with you in promoting peace and the advancement of individuals and peoples.

Thank you, Mister Chair!