



ENGLISH TRANSLATION

**THE HOLY SEE**

Statement of H.E. Bishop Mario Toso, SDB  
Head of the Delegation of the Holy See  
to the High-Level Meeting of the OSCE on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination  
Astana, Kazakhstan, 29-30 June 2010

**The Role of Education to Promote Mutual Understanding and Respect for  
Diversity according to the Existing OSCE Commitments**

Mr. President,

The Delegation of the Holy See is pleased to contribute to this discussion, seeing as it does the essential role of education in promoting mutual respect and understanding, particularly in the framework of existing OSCE commitments. Likewise, the Holy See expresses its gratitude to the OSCE/ODIHR for its commitment to education and awareness raising in the promotion of human rights. As is well known among colleagues here, the Holy See is concerned that this organization remain focused on *agreed* commitments in this regard, seeing in them the basis for the most fruitful deliberations among Member States towards the effective realization of the goals that we have clearly outlined together in promoting mutual understanding and respect.

As part of the general education process, to counteract racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance associated with it, there must be a specific effort to present—especially to young people—certain major values such as the unity of the human race, the dignity of every human being, and the solidarity which binds together all members of the human family. Equally important is an education in respect for human rights. In addition to students in schools and universities, certain professions are in special need of a theoretical and practical formation in the area of human rights. (government officials, lawyers, judges and law enforcement officers, but also teachers, social workers and journalists). This is not to deny that education in human rights is a slow and complex process, especially when particular countries have been through years of conflict, or when they face ongoing challenges to development, and economic and social dysfunctions. Civil administrations, electoral systems, police forces, and educational systems must all be included in our efforts to promote mutual respect and understanding among persons and communities.

Mr. President, if peace cannot be attained without respect for human rights, by the same token without education in human rights, peace and respect for others are impossible: “without education in moral values, in the people and with their leaders or future leaders, every construction of peace remains fragile; it is even doomed to failure, whatever be the cleverness of diplomats or the forces displayed. It is the duty of politicians, educators, families, and those in charge of the media to contribute to this formation. And the Church is always ready to make her contribution.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, *Address to the Diplomatic Corps* (12 January 1985), no. 7.

In his most recent Encyclical Letter, entitled *Charity in Truth*, Pope Benedict XVI has written about the fundamental role of education in creating a more human world for all persons, a world where persons will be formed to be good stewards, not only of the natural environment in which we are privileged to live and move and have our being, but of our relationships to one another. “It is contradictory,” he says, “to insist that future generations respect the natural environment when our educational systems and laws do not help them to respect themselves. The book of nature is one and indivisible: it takes in not only the environment but also life, sexuality, marriage, the family, social relations: in a word, integral human development. Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person, considered in himself and in relation to others. It would be wrong to uphold one set of duties while trampling on the other. Herein lies a grave contradiction in our mentality and practice today: one which demeans the person, disrupts the environment and damages society.”<sup>2</sup>

In conclusion, the Holy See would like to recall that, in the work of education and awareness, the family forms persons in the fullness of their dignity according to all their dimensions, including the social dimension. The family, in fact, constitutes a community of love and solidarity which is uniquely suited to teach and transmit cultural, ethical, social, spiritual and religious values essential for the development and well-being of its own members and of society. By exercising its mission to educate, the family contributes to the common good and constitutes the first school of social virtue, which all societies need. In the family, persons are helped to grow in freedom and responsibility, indispensable prerequisites for any function in society. With education, certain fundamental values are communicated and assimilated. That is why the family has a completely original and irreplaceable role in raising children. Parents have the duty and right to impart a religious education and moral formation to their children, a right the State cannot annul but which it must respect and promote. This is a primary right that the family may not neglect or delegate, yet must at the same time exercise with responsibility in close and vigilant cooperation with civil and ecclesial agencies, since both are necessary for an integral education directed toward the formation of people educated in dialogue, encounter, sociality, legality, solidarity and peace, through the cultivation of the fundamental virtues of justice and charity.<sup>3</sup>

Thank you, Mr. President.

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<sup>2</sup> Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 51.

<sup>3</sup> Cf., *Compendium*., nos. 238-242.