



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 851st MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 FEBRUARY 2011

**RE: ADDRESS BY U.S. SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE TO MUSLIM
COMMUNITIES AND U.S. SPECIAL ENVOY TO MONITOR AND COMBAT
ANTI-SEMITISM**

Mister Chairperson,

1. The Holy See also joins other Delegations in welcoming to the Permanent Council Farah Pandith and Hannah Rosenthal, respectively U.S. Special Representative to Muslim Communities and U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, and thanks them for their address.

Their participation at the Permanent Council testifies to the importance which the OSCE continues to attach to these issues. In fact, in a world that is drawing ever closer together, the question about the meeting of religions and cultures has become a most important subject, and one that is certainly not just the business of theology. Thus the question of the peaceableness of cultures, of peace and tolerance in matters of religion, has also moved up to become a political and security theme of the first rank.

2. The commitment of the Catholic Church to combating religious intolerance and discrimination is well known.

There is no place in the modern world for anti-Semitism. The Catholic Church has irrevocably committed itself to pursue the path of dialogue, fraternity and friendship between the Catholic community and our Jewish brothers and sisters, a journey which has been deepened and developed in the last forty years, through important steps and significant gestures. The progress made in this important relationship is in no small part

due to the work of the International Committee for Catholic-Jewish Relations and, in more recent years, by the Mixed Commission of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and of the Holy See, which have worked together in discovering anew a common spiritual patrimony, to keep open the space for dialogue, for reciprocal respect, for growth in friendship, and for a common witness in the face of the challenges of our time, which invite us to cooperate for the good of humanity.

3. The Holy See continues to be concerned about incidents of violence, intolerance and discrimination perpetrated against Muslim communities within the OSCE region, and recognizes the need for Christians and Muslims to learn how to work together, as indeed they already do in many common undertakings, in order to guard against intolerance and to oppose manifestations of violence. Religious authorities and political leaders alike must guide and encourage them in this direction. The lessons of the past must help the human family to seek paths of reconciliation, in order to live with respect for the dignity and freedom of each individual. To be sure, however, respect and dialogue require reciprocity in all spheres, especially in that which concerns basic freedoms, and more particularly, religious freedom.

4. With the increase of religious intolerance in the world, it is well documented that Christians are the religious group most discriminated against as there are more than 200 million of them, of different confessions, who are in situations of difficulty because of persecution, as well as legal and cultural structures that lead to their discrimination. This discrimination and marginalization, particularly of Christianity, is often seen in quarters or nations which place a great emphasis on tolerance. The Holy See is convinced that the international community must fight intolerance and discrimination against Christians with the same determination as it would fight hatred against members of other religious communities. Participating States of the OSCE have committed themselves fight against discrimination and intolerance against Christians. What came out clearly from the Round Table discussion in March 2009 is that intolerance and discrimination against Christians is manifested in various forms across the OSCE area.

5. The Holy See is convinced of the importance that the institution of the three Personal Representatives brings to the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination in the priority areas where the participating States have reached consensus - combating anti-Semitism; intolerance and discrimination against Muslims; Christians and members of other religions, and racism, xenophobia and related intolerance. In fact, this year's continued concerted efforts of the three Personal Representatives has shown that the agreed commitments of the OSCE are strong and noble, and are supported by a stable mandate and the principle of consensus. The Holy See reaffirms these commitments, and encourages this Organization to remain focused on them, so as to guarantee the effectiveness and efficiency of the OSCE into the future.

Thank you, Mister Chairperson.