

**2010 OSCE REVIEW CONFERENCE**  
**30 September – 8 October 2010**  
**Warsaw**

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4 October 2010  
ENGLISH only

Right of Reply: The Holy See  
Working Session 2: Freedom of Thought, Conscience, Religion or Belief  
Monsignor Anthony R. Frontiero, Official of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace  
1 October 2010

Madam Moderator,

The Delegation of the Holy See deeply regrets that the representatives of the European Humanist Federation and its Italian affiliate organization *Unione degli Atei e degli Agnostici Razionalisti* view their participation in this important Review Conference as an attempt to discredit the Holy See, which has an esteemed and time-honored history of diplomacy. Indeed, the Holy See is a founding member of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe. It is a sovereign body fully recognized by all of the distinguished participating States present at this table. The Holy See has diplomatic relations with most of the countries in the world and it participates in international organizations and conferences. My Delegation does not accept—as none of the participating States would—that the legitimacy of the Holy See in actively contributing to the work of the OSCE/ODIHR according to our agreed commitments should be questioned. Moreover, the Holy See and the institutions and agencies of the Catholic Church throughout the world are among the most ardent human rights defenders around the globe, including the rights of non-believers. The status of the Holy See and its commitment to human rights are not in question in this forum, nor is it even relevant to raise this matter in the context of this Working Session of the Review Conference, which is aimed at taking stock of the OSCE mandate and commitments in favor of Freedom of Thought, Conscience, Religion or Belief.

My Delegation finds it troubling, and indeed counterproductive, that the European Humanist Federation and its Italian affiliate organization would instrumentalize this meeting to promote the idea that the answer to the question of fundamental freedoms including freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief is that we somehow expunge religion from society and cleanse the culture of any religious sentiment or belief whatsoever, including the civil and religious value of reconciliation.

The fundamental right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief is enshrined in the Constitutions of the participating States represented around this table, and I am quite sure that this is the case not with the aim of restricting the rights of believers, or to relegate their beliefs to the private sphere, but because participating States recognize (as the annotated agenda for this meeting clearly indicates) the “transcendent dimension of the human being, which includes the freedom of individuals to manifest their religion or belief through worship, practice and observance both alone and in community with others.” How to advance this freedom in the OSCE region is the issue at hand, Madam

Moderator, not how to abolish it. This said, I would ask my friends from the European Humanist Federation, to consider contributing to a more constructive and respectful dialogue in this regard. I recommend that they reflect with the other participants on the questions posed in the annotated agenda on this theme, namely: How participating States can ensure and facilitate the freedom of the individual to profess and practice a religion or belief, alone or in community with others? How can they promote it as a *positive* factor for cultural and social life? Thank you, Madam Moderator.