



HOLY SEE

2009 HDIM, Warsaw

Freedom of Thought, Conscience, Religion or Belief

(Working Session 2: 29 September 2009)

The Holy See recommends that:

- 1) Participating States and OSCE institutions engage in awareness raising efforts in order to strengthen knowledge of the constructive contribution of religion in history, as well as its positive impact in educational, cultural, social, and charitable sectors of society.
- 2) Participating States should ensure to all individuals subject to their jurisdiction the full exercise of the right to freedom of religion or belief. Religious freedom should be considered as pre-eminent among the fundamental rights and its defense as the “litmus test” for the respect of all other human rights.
- 3) Religious freedom should not be considered inferior, nor religiously motivated behaviors or opinions considered irrelevant to public discourse.
- 4) Participating States and OSCE institutions should take greater care to articulate that a healthy concept of secularism is inclusive and respectful of all Christians, and encourages constant dialogue between institutions, churches and religious communities. This dialogue is necessary, among other things, in order to respect the principles of an authentic pluralism and to construct a true democracy.
- 5) Participating States should respect the right of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians of children to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions, subject to providing protection for the rights of each child to freedom of religion or belief consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.
- 6) Participating States should ensure that laws governing access to legal personality for religious organizations are structured in ways that facilitate the freedom of religion or belief, and not in any way infringe upon this right.
- 7) The right to express one’s convictions, beliefs, and faith is a vital dimension of the human person, and this right is enshrined in international human rights instruments. Participating States should ensure that missionaries enjoy legal protection from violence and discrimination.