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Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting
1-2 April 2019
Session 1

To:

**OSCE
OSCE Member States
State of Ukraine
State of Montenegro
State of the Republic
of North Macedonia
International
Organisations**

Dear participants of the meeting, ladies and gentlemen!

It is primarily the state authorities that should promote respect for the principles of tolerance and non-discrimination in discharging their duties, because any negative example of impunity and even more so hostility on the part of civil servants is viewed by the radically-minded part of society as a signal to hostile action against victims.

Therefore, states should set a pattern of best practice and prevent the slightest possibility of massive religion-based violations. Unfortunately, today in Ukraine, Montenegro and the Republic of North Macedonia, our human rights organization is witnessing violations of the rights of Christians of the Ukrainian and Serbian Orthodox Churches committed by government agencies and high-ranking civil servants. The states continue to interfere in the internal affairs of the said Churches and seek to maintain only that confession, which is most beneficial in terms of their political agenda.

A detailed account of the facts of violations of the rights of believers of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is given in our written statements, submitted at the 40th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

The statements is available on the website of the UN Documentation Center:
<http://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/40/NGO/71>, <http://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/40/NGO/69>

This is exactly how things are currently unfolding in Ukraine, where for the last five years churches of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church have been illegally taken over. A series of odious laws have been passed to forcibly change the name of our religious organizations. Now, the Orthodox Christian communities in Ukraine are being overtly discriminated. Unfortunately, we are now observing how the recent actions of Patriarch Bartholomew compounded by the failure of the Ukrainian authorities to fulfil their international commitments to protect human rights have contributed to the aggravation of the religious division and brought about sectarian strife.

I draw your attention to the fact that the full texts of the official decisions of the Constantinople Patriarchate on Ukraine have not yet been publicized and disclosed to the world community. So far, no one has been able to assess the juridical and canonical legitimacy of those secret decisions. I inform you that our official requests submitted to the Patriarchate of Constantinople to provide us with the full texts of his decisions have received no due response by today. We are convinced that decisions of this importance cannot be adopted in a secret manner, and that Patriarch Bartholomew is obliged not only to show his Tomos to the whole world, but also to disclose the voting procedure so that everyone can ascertain that there are no legal or canonical defects in his decisions.

This issue is examined at length in our written statement submitted within the 40th session of the UN Human Rights Council. The statement is available on the website of the UN Documentation Centre: <http://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/40/NGO/72>

We strongly believe that the OSCE and participating States can influence Patriarch Bartholomew through legal and diplomatic means, because his thoughtless actions in Ukraine brought about a new round of religious war.

The hierarchs of the “Orthodox Church of Ukraine” created by Patriarch Bartholomew, in our opinion, should show more tolerance and effectively influence their flock in order to prevent unlawful seizures of property, as well as other violations of the rights of believers of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Unfortunately, the clergymen of the new denomination have taken part in numerous assaults on the churches and parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which leads to the destruction of religious tolerance and is therefore unacceptable.

As for Montenegro, in this country, diversified pressure is being exerted on the religious communities of the Serbian Orthodox Church. More than 50 clergymen were denied residence permits by the state, because they refused to register their religious communities in a new state registry. Attacks on churches have also been reported. The attempt of the state to adopt a draft law, which has been criticized by the Venice Commission of the European Union for Democracy through Law, does not contribute to religious peace in Montenegro.

The situation in Montenegro in more detail is described in our written statement submitted at the 40th session of the UN Human Rights Council. The statement is available on the website of the UN Documentation Centre: <http://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/40/NGO/73>

In the Republic of North Macedonia, Orthodox Christian communities have been severely persecuted, their churches have been taken over, the clergy and hierarchs of the Serbian Orthodox Church have been baselessly detained and imprisoned.

A detailed account of the facts of violations of the rights of Orthodox Christian religious organizations in the country is set out in our written statement submitted at the 40th session of the UN Human Rights Council. The statement is available on the website of the UN Documentation Centre: <http://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/38/NGO/23>

The reason for this plight of Orthodox Christian communities in the above-mentioned countries is the lack of real observance of the principle of rule of law, low level of legal culture and irresponsible conduct of civil servants who are engaged in making up policies in relation to religious issues. This situation should be remedied.

I urge the OSCE and participating States, as well as other international organizations to promote the restoration of religious peace in Ukraine and take all necessary measures to prevent violation of the rights of the faithful in the Republic of North Macedonia and Montenegro.

Thank you very much for your attention,

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