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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 862nd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL
19 MAY 2011**

RE: REVIEW OF CURRENT ISSUES

Mister Chairman,

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the well-known position of the Holy See that sexual orientation does not belong to the area of competence of the OSCE and its agenda. There is no consensus among participating States on this issue, even if some are trying to force the Organization to deal with it.

Furthermore, the Holy See will not accept to discuss the issue of sexual orientation under tolerance and non-discrimination, as well as in the fight against hate crimes, as suggested by some Delegations, because there are no commitments in this regard. The only consensus document of the OSCE with a list of motives is MC.DEC/12/04. We should continue to work on the basis of this Decision, as well as on MC.DEC/09/09 adopted in Athens.

In fact, what is needed in our Organization is more focused energy and efforts to fulfill the OSCE commitments agreed upon by all participating States, and to resist the unilateral expansion of the same. Undue attention to other concerns serves only to distract the efforts of the OSCE, as well as to forestall the original commitments, many of which have yet to be implemented.

And finally, Mr. Chairman, my Delegation would like to call attention to a disturbing trend in some of these social debates. People are being attacked for taking positions that do not support sexual behaviour between people of the same sex. When they express peacefully their moral beliefs or beliefs about human nature, which may also be expressions of religious convictions, or state opinions about scientific claims, they are stigmatised, and worse, they are vilified and prosecuted. These attacks contradict the fundamental principles of the OSCE and are violations of fundamental human rights, *inter alia* the right to freedom of religion, and cannot be justified under any circumstances.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.