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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 880th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

15 SEPTEMBER 2011

**RE: REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN-IN-OFFICE
ROME CONFERENCE ON HATE CRIMES AGAINST CHRISTIANS**

Mr. Chairman,

The Holy See welcomes the attention that is being given to “preventing and responding to hate incidents and crimes against Christians” through the Conference that was held last Monday in Rome. I would like to reiterate my gratitude to all who contributed to the organization of this event, in particular the Lithuanian Chair of the OSCE, the ODIHR, the Italian Government, the *Comune di Roma* and the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also Focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of other Religions.

The meeting was attended by 150 representatives of the OSCE’s 56 participating States, religious communities and non-governmental organizations. The keynote speakers at the meeting were Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, the Holy See’s Secretary for Relations with States, and Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate’s Department for External Church Relations.

What emerged clearly from the Conference is that it is indisputable that hate crimes against Christians occur in the OSCE region. The three Sessions were dedicated to the following themes: Hate-motivated Crimes and Incidents against Christians in the OSCE area; Preventing and Responding to hate Crimes and Incidents against Christians: International, National and Local responses;

Special Challenges in Preventing and Responding to Attacks on Places of Worship. These sessions saw lively discussions on the monitoring and reporting of hate crimes and incidents against Christians; the necessity to initiate a public debate in such crimes, as well as the need for a more in-depth analysis of the context of these crimes; the need for greater awareness-raising and educational programs; effective enjoyment of the freedom of religion; greater emphasis on the positive influence of religions – something that has always been a hallmark of the OSCE approach to religions; and the development of law enforcement and community initiatives.

Since the Sofia Ministerial Conference, participating States of the OSCE have committed themselves fight against discrimination and intolerance against Christians. The Holy See would like to encourage all OSCE participating States to dedicate more attention to hate crimes against Christians, as well as to collect statistics on these crimes and to send them to the ODIHR.

I would like also to recall that during its recent 20th Annual Session, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA) approved a Resolution on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination Against Christians in the OSCE Area. During last Monday's Conference, this Resolution was referred to frequently. The PA recommended, *inter alia*, "that a public debate on intolerance and discrimination against Christians be initiated and that the right of Christians to participate fully in public life be ensured." This is an important contribution of our Organization to the response to hate-motivated crimes and incidents against Christians.

In conclusion, the Holy See renews its gratitude to all who contributed to the success of the Conference and is confident that Monday's Rome Conference will contribute to the development of concrete and effective proposals to fight intolerance and discrimination, as well as hate crimes and incidents against Christians.

Thank you, Mister Chairman.