



**STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE**

**AT THE THIRTY-SECOND MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

**OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY  
AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE)**

**DELIVERED BY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY**  
**ARCHBISHOP PAUL RICHARD GALLAGHER**

**SECRETARY FOR RELATIONS WITH STATES AND  
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS OF THE HOLY SEE**

**Vienna**  
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Madam Chair,

I am honoured to convey the best wishes, prayers and support of His Holiness, Pope Leo XIV, to all the participants of this 32<sup>nd</sup> Ministerial Council and to the entire OSCE community.

I would like to express my gratitude, and that of the Holy See, to you, Madam Chair, and to the entire team of the 2025 Finnish OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office for your efforts throughout this year. My appreciation also goes to the Government of Austria and the City of Vienna for the warm and cordial hospitality they are offering during these days, as always.

Madam Chair, dear Colleagues,

*50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act*

This Ministerial Council, held in the context of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, offers an important opportunity to reaffirm our shared principles and commitments, and renew our dedication to them and to their full implementation.

The Holy See maintains the conviction that peace, security and justice are inextricably linked to the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to fostering friendly relations and co-operation among States.

*Fostering Dialogue and Peace in the OSCE Region and Beyond*

During his first Apostolic Journey to Türkiye and Lebanon, Pope Leo XIV emphasized that “Today, more than ever, we need people who will promote dialogue and practice it with firm will and patient resolve. In the aftermath of the tragedies of two world wars, which saw the building of large international organizations, we are now experiencing a phase marked by a heightened level of conflict on the global level, fuelled by prevailing strategies of economic and military power. We must in no way give in to this!”<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, our times are marked by profound divisions, growing mistrust and divergent perceptions of security, as well as the re-emergence of conflicts on the European continent. The Holy See is deeply concerned by the ongoing war in Ukraine. At the same time, we cannot ignore that, in addition to Ukraine, other participating States continue to face numerous challenges to their security and

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<sup>1</sup> POPE LEO XIV, *Meeting with the Authorities, civil society and the Diplomatic Corps, Ankara, 27 November 2025.*

stability. In this context, the Holy See urges all parties to resume genuine dialogue, to cease hostilities, and to pursue a just and lasting peace.

The OSCE must renew its foundational commitment to conflict prevention and resolution with urgency and creativity. Dialogue is not a sign of weakness; rather, it is the only way to achieve reconciliation and lasting stability.

### *Freedom of Religion or Belief*

The significant rise of manifestations of anti-Semitism, as well as intolerance and discrimination against Christians, Muslims, and members of other religions throughout the OSCE region is alarming. The Holy See welcomes the recently launched guide on combating anti-Christian hate crimes<sup>2</sup>, and is confident that the executive structures of the OSCE, together with participating States, will address all forms of intolerance and discrimination against Christians, Jews, Muslims and members of other religions, ensuring that they receive equal attention, while avoiding partial or selective approaches.

These episodes have led, in recent years, to the misconception that freedom of religion or belief can be equated with tolerance or non-discrimination. Yet tolerance alone is not synonymous with genuine freedom.

Indeed, at the heart of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security lies the human dimension, which encompasses respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law<sup>3</sup>. Of these, freedom of religion or belief is the only fundamental freedom explicitly enshrined in the Helsinki Decalogue.

In this light, the Holy See therefore urges participating States and OSCE executive structures to prioritize freedom of religion or belief. This remains a vital litmus test for the respect and protection of all other human rights and fundamental freedoms.

### *Migration, Human Trafficking, and the Protection of Human Dignity*

Our States continue to face a profound and challenging test of solidarity in the treatment of migrants, refugees and displaced persons. The Holy See reminds this Council that the human face of migration must never be overlooked, because the inalienable, God-given dignity of every human person cannot be violated. In this regard, it is important to recognise that every migrant is a person, not a mere statistic, who merits protection, hospitality, and opportunities for meaningful integration.

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<sup>2</sup> OSCE/ODIHR, *Understanding Anti-Christian Hate Crimes and Addressing the Security Needs of Christian Communities – A Practical Guide*, Warsaw, 2025.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. OSCE, *Astana Commemorative Declaration*, 7.

The Holy See commends the OSCE's ongoing efforts to combat trafficking in human beings, particularly the exploitation of women and children, including through practices such as surrogate motherhood. This heinous form of modern slavery must be eradicated through concerted and coordinated action at national and international levels.

### *Conclusion*

In conclusion, the Holy See calls for the revitalization of the OSCE's mission, grounded in the foundational principle of *consensus*, by seeking to overcome isolation, placing greater emphasis on dialogue, and seriously examining the reasons why *consensus* so often proves difficult to reach. Indeed, true relationships and dialogue require clear and unambiguous language. In fact, where language is not commonly agreed or is reinterpreted or becomes ambiguous, efforts for dialogue may be put in jeopardy.

At a time of growing polarization, the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security, based on the respect for the human person and sovereign equality of participating States, remains highly relevant. Let us strive to recover the spirit of Helsinki: a spirit of openness, dialogue, common understanding, hope and compromise. In this spirit, let us work to reach a *consensus* on the Chairmanship of the OSCE for 2027.

The Holy See looks forward to cooperating with the incoming Swiss Chairmanship led by Federal Counsellor Ignacio Cassis, Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, and encourages the Chairmanship to adopt an inclusive approach toward all 57 OSCE participating States.

The Holy See reaffirms its steadfast commitment and unwavering dedication to the OSCE, while encouraging the cultivation of shared trust and responsibility in the pursuit of a more just and peaceful world.

Thank you, Madam Chair.