



DELEGATION OF UKRAINE

**STATEMENT
at the 2007 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**

WORKING SESSION 4: Fundamental freedoms

(Warsaw, 26th of September 2007)

Freedom of belief, conscience and religion in Ukraine

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

According to the Constitution of Ukraine, the citizens have equal constitutional rights and freedoms and are equal under the law. The violation of the citizen's rights and freedoms based on race, ethnical or social origin, religious or other beliefs is criminally punishable. Committing a crime based on race, national or religious enmity or discord aggravate a punishment. Violation of the freedom of conscience is also considered as a crime.

Everyone has the right to freely collect, store, use and distribute information by oral, written or other means of his or her choice.

These rights may be restricted if the information contains a state secret or poses a serious threat to the national security.

The legislative framework for collecting, storing, using and disseminating information are settled by the Law of Ukraine «On information» which also stipulates the right of person to gather information about all spheres of public and state life of Ukraine. Abovementioned law also regulates access to information, protects a person and society from a slander.

Bearing in mind the European standards, with the purpose to improve the legal regulations of access to information, including official one and to observe the relevant provisions of the Constitution of Ukraine, the Ministry of Justice has elaborated the draft Concept of a new Law of Ukraine „On Information”. The preparation of the said draft was conducted in close cooperation with the relevant state institutions and representatives of civil society.

The freedom of conscience and religion is provided by Article 35 of the Constitution of Ukraine which corresponds to Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and to Article 9 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

The Law of Ukraine “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations” provides the legal norms, related to freedom of world-view, religion and activity of religious organizations.

In order to bring national legislation into conformity with the European norms and standards in this sphere, the Ministry of Justice has developed a new draft Law “On Freedom of Belief and Religious Organizations”. The purpose of this document is to amend the current legislation with the following provisions:

- to set a new, more liberal system of state registration for religious organizations;
- to extend the rights of religious organizations on charitable, educational, and cultural activities;
- to define terms and conditions of restitution of a former church property to religious organizations.

The results of public discussion, suggestions of various religious organizations, and recommendations of Venice Commission and OSCE experts have been taken into account while preparing the said draft.

At present stage of drafting, abovementioned document is delivered to the representatives of the churches, religious organizations and to All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations for their consideration and in order to reach consensus regarding its final version.

Thanks for your attention.