

Bahá'í International Community
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**Contribution of the Bahá'í International Community (BIC) to the OSCE's
Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Human
Dimension Implementation meeting 2015**

Workshop 15 on Freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief

The Bahá'í International Community believes that the question of freedom of religion or belief is intrinsically linked to the question of the role religion or belief play in society. We believe that the promotion of the right to freedom of religion or belief needs to go hand in hand with a deeper understanding as to why it is so important that individuals can exercise this right as well as with a deeper understanding as to how religion contributes to the advancement of society. It is not surprising that our perceptions of the contribution of religion to the advancement of society tend to get clouded when we see some of the very destructive expressions of religious belief that appear throughout the world and in Europe today. Those expressions are well documented and naturally many of our deliberations and efforts go into addressing and containing them. The Bahá'í International Community however feels that it is timely to start a collective process of identifying a framework that will allow the constructive powers of religion to find expression. We therefore encourage the OSCE to start a process of exploring how religion, its principles, its concepts and its insights, contribute to resolving conflict, to facilitating greater social harmony and to creating stable and peaceful societies.