



## STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE

### Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2017

*Session 7: Tolerance and non-discrimination*

**Warsaw, 14 September 2017**

Mme Moderator,

The Holy See's commitment to tolerance and non-discrimination is an expression of its continued desire to affirm and defend the dignity of every human person, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. In the context of the OSCE, tolerance and non-discrimination – as with the entire human dimension – takes on a more comprehensive meaning: as these concepts ultimately regard how to think and relate to “the other”, especially the one who is different, they advance stability in and between States, thus moving us all away from conflict and towards security.

Pope Francis has stressed that in our desire to build a solid and lasting peace, at the local as well as the international level, we should seek in our societies a harmony inspired by “*the polyhedron, which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness*”<sup>1</sup>. Fundamentally, respect for the human person proceeds by way of respect for the principle that “*everyone should look upon [the other] (without any exception) as another self*”, especially when it involves the disadvantaged<sup>2</sup>.

The Holy See feels obliged to reiterate that the commitments on tolerance and non-discrimination cannot be separated from longstanding commitments to freedom of religion and belief. The implementation of the first requires that the latter should also be fully implemented: tolerance, in fact, cannot be an alibi for denying or not guaranteeing religious freedom, or restricting the freedom of religion or belief or other fundamental freedoms.

The participating States, when considering the nature and purpose of the OSCE as a security organization, have agreed by consensus to limit the OSCE's interest in the area of tolerance and non-discrimination to those phenomena that could threaten the security and stability of the Region.<sup>3</sup> The reason for this limited scope of OSCE interest is not in order to ignore certain issues, but rather

---

<sup>1</sup> Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father Francis *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 236.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 1931.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. US Delegation to the OSCE, HDIM 2008, Session 10 (6 October 2008), HDIM.DEL/346/08.

reflects the Organization's decision to jointly address the phenomena that might erode confidence between States and trigger violence and conflict on a wider-scale, thus endangering peaceful relations among the States.

In this light, the HDIM serves to facilitate dialogue between all participating States and civil society, so as to ensure the timely and effective implementation of all relevant OSCE commitments. This is not to diminish the comprehensive reach of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all human beings, but to more effectively address them and, while fully recognizing the importance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, to implement the OSCE commitments on tolerance and non discrimination in a timely and effective manner. This concern does not exclude other platforms and fora that, based on their mandates, discuss valid issues related to tolerance and non-discrimination not covered by the agreed commitments and that are, therefore, outside of the scope of the HDIM and the OSCE.

The Delegation of the Holy See wishes to make the following recommendations:

- that the OSCE participating States, in their implementation of commitments related to tolerance and non-discrimination, carefully safeguard all universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, as they are understood in OSCE consensually agreed decisions;
- that ODIHR evaluate its tolerance and non-discrimination work in light of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, assuring that these rights and freedoms are not made competitors with one another.

Thank you, Mme Moderator.