



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE HOLY SEE  
TO THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY  
AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

**STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE  
AS DELIVERED BY MSGR. MARINKO ANTOLOVIĆ  
AT THE 970<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

**7 NOVEMBER 2013**

**RE: REPORT BY THE PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVES  
OF THE CHAIRMAN-IN-OFFICE ON COMBATING ANTI-SEMITISM;  
ON COMBATING INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST  
MUSLIMS; AND ON COMBATING RACISM, XENOPHOBIA AND  
DISCRIMINATION, ALSO FOCUSING ON  
INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIANS  
AND MEMBERS OF OTHER RELIGIONS**

Mr. Chairman,

The Holy See also joins other Delegations in welcoming the three Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office and thanks them for their reports. We are convinced of the importance of their role in the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination in the priority areas where the participating States have reached consensus - combating anti-Semitism; intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, Christians and members of other religions, and racism, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Mr. Chairman,

The Holy See has constantly reiterated that there is no place in the modern world for anti-Semitism. The Catholic Church has irrevocably committed itself to pursuing the path of dialogue, fraternity and friendship between the Catholic community and our Jewish brothers and sisters.

While remembering the courageous role of many Christians in protecting their Jewish brothers and sisters during the Holocaust in his recent address to representatives of the Jewish Community of Rome, Pope Francis said that he wanted to “emphasize this aspect, because if it is true that it is important, on both sides, to deepen theological

reflection through dialogue, it is also true that there is another vital dialogue, that of everyday experience, which is equally fundamental. Indeed, without the latter, without a real and concrete culture of encounter that leads to authentic relationships, without prejudice and suspicion, engagement in the intellectual field would serve but little. Here, too, as I often like to emphasize, the People of God have their own nose and they sense the path that God is asking them to take. In this case it is the path of friendship, closeness and fraternity.” (*Address of Pope Francis to Representatives of Jewish Community of Rome, 11 October 2013*)

In order to combine our efforts in promoting a culture of encounter, respect, understanding and mutual forgiveness, Pope Francis underlined, when addressing the Delegation of the Simon Wiesenthal Center last month, the importance of education, “not only as the transmission of facts, but as the handing on of a living witness. This presupposes the establishment of a communion of life, a covenant with the coming generations, which is always open to truth. To the young, we must be able to convey not only a knowledge of the history of Jewish-Catholic dialogue about past difficulties, but also an awareness of the progress made in recent decades. Above all we must be able to transmit a passion for meeting and coming to know others, promoting an active and responsible involvement of our young people. It is here that commitment to the service of society and to those most in need acquires a special value. I encourage you to continue to pass on to the young the importance of working together to reject walls and build bridges between our cultures and our faith traditions. May we go forward with trust, courage and hope!” (*Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Delegation of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, 24 October 2013*)

Mr. Chairman,

The Holy See continues to pay due attention to and reiterates its profound concern about incidents of violence, intolerance and discrimination perpetrated against Muslims within the OSCE region. This phenomenon is often connected with racism, xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiments. Such sentiments are at times encouraged by negative trends and anti-Muslim tendencies in the media and in political discourse, but also by numerous manifestations of Islam which consequently result in a generalization applied to all Muslims. Other elements that contribute considerably to the climate of intolerance against Muslims are: identification of Muslims with terrorism, the global economic crisis, fears about national identity, stereotypes and prejudices about Muslims. All these can in no way justify acts of violence and bigotry.

At the same time, we recognize the need for Christians and Muslims, as well as for society at large, to learn how to work together. In this year’s *Message to Muslims throughout the world for the end of Ramadan*, Pope Francis stated: “We are called to respect the religion of the other, its teachings, its symbols, its values. Particular respect is due to religious leaders and to places of worship. How painful are attacks on one or other of these!”

He then stressed the importance of mutual respect, saying: “We all know that mutual respect is fundamental in any human relationship, especially among people who profess religious belief. In this way, sincere and lasting friendship can grow.”

It should be added that respect and dialogue require reciprocity in all spheres, especially with regard to basic freedoms, and, more particularly, religious freedom.

Speaking of education of Muslim and Christian youth in the same Message, and I believe this could be apply to youth in general, Pope Francis said: “We have to bring up our young people to think and speak respectfully of other religions and their followers, and to avoid ridiculing or denigrating their convictions and practices.”

Mr. Chairman,

In spite of the commitments undertaken by member States of the OSCE in the area of religious freedom, in some countries intolerant and even discriminatory laws, decisions and behavior, either by action or omission, which deny this freedom, still exist against the Church and Christian communities, and against other religious communities, as well as their members. In particular, there is illegitimate interference with regard to their organizational autonomy, intolerance against Christian speech, attempts to limit expressions of religious faith to places of worship and to certain initiatives of a social nature and limitations on their ability to act consistently with their own moral convictions. At times, unfortunately, and this is an increasing trend, undue pressure is brought to bear upon people working in public administration to act in contrast with their freedom to behave in accordance with the dictates of their own conscience. Educational programs are deficient in duly respecting the identity and principles of Christians and members of other religions, and there are clear signs of resistance to the recognition of religion’s public role. Nor are the media and public discourse always free from attitudes of intolerance and, sometimes, of actual denigration of Christians and members of other religions. When many would like to exclude religious believers from full participation in society’s fundamental institutions, this is precisely the time to insist on the right to participate. Religious believers should therefore be allowed to express their religious identity publicly, free from any pressure to hide or disguise it.

We are of the opinion that in order to prevent violence and discrimination based on religious grounds, it is very important to promote and consolidate religious freedom, since it is from the poisoned ground of the denial of religious freedom and the discrimination of religion that, in the end, violence is almost always born. It is, therefore, of crucial significance that global awareness of the problem be raised everywhere.

In conclusion, my Delegation would like to reiterate its support for the efforts of the three Personal Representatives in promoting religious freedom, combating at the same time religiously motivated hate crimes, discrimination and intolerance, and wish you very successful work in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman!