



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE BOLLETTINO

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسى الرسولي BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ

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Intervento della Santa Sede al Consiglio ministeriale dell'Osce (Belgrado, 3-4 dicembre 2015)

Riportiamo di seguito l'intervento che l'Arcivescovo Paul Richard Gallagher, Segretario per i Rapporti con gli Stati, ha pronunciato questa mattina al ventiduesimo Consiglio ministeriale dell'Organizzazione per la sicurezza e la cooperazione in Europa (Osce) sul tema *In difesa della libertà di religione*, in corso a Belgrado dal 3 al 4 dicembre:

Intervento di S.E. Mons. Paul Richard Gallagher

Mr Chairman,

Participating for the first time at an OSCE Ministerial Council as Secretary for the Holy See's Relations with States, I would like to begin by presenting to this assembly my greetings and best wishes. I also wish to express the gratitude of the Holy See to the Chairman-in-Office, His Excellency Mr Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, as well as to the entire 2015 Serbian OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office, for its efforts during the course of the year and its generous hospitality in these days.

Since the last Ministerial Council we have witnessed many conflicts and terrorist attacks, both inside and outside the OSCE region, which have resulted in the death and injury of too many human beings. Moreover, in the last year Europe has faced an extraordinary migration of people, fleeing from wars and persecutions, as well as from poverty and exclusion, in areas neighbouring the OSCE region. The Holy See and the Catholic Church remain close to those who suffer and are exposed to violence, not only through pastoral assistance and material support, but also through a commitment to defending human dignity.

In today's situations of grave conflict and terrorism, I would like to focus particularly on the human dimension of this Organization, since an important aim of the Holy See's participation in the CSCE/OSCE has always been to promote universal human rights and fundamental freedoms and to encourage peaceful solutions, in dialogue among all concerned. To quote Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, who represented the Holy See at the Helsinki Conference: "A Europe of the rights of men and of peoples: this is what must be realised ever more fully. It is already a conviction that spans the continent: respect for human dignity is the greatest good to be pursued" (Speech of Cardinal Agostino Casaroli at the Summit of Head of States and Governments, Paris 1990).

We should note, with deep concern, that in the entire OSCE area, many persons and communities are subject to threats, acts of hostility and violence because of their racial, ethnic or religious identity. The extent of such phenomena and the possibility that they may trigger further violence and conflict on a wider scale, thus undermining the peace and stability of the Region, requires a specific response. The Holy See remains confident that the OSCE and the ODIHR will focus their energy, efforts and resources on pursuing those commitments which have already been made, many of which have yet to be implemented.

Regarding intolerance and discrimination, one of the lessons learned in recent years is that it has become outdated to talk about minority and majority communities, since the victims may belong to either. In particular, in the case of Christians, it is recognized that they suffer persecution in many countries, but even in countries where they are the majority they may also, in subtle ways, be subject to certain curtailments of their rights. Therefore all forms of religious intolerance and discrimination should be carefully identified and equally addressed.

It is important to recall, in accordance with the indivisibility, interdependence and interrelation of human rights, 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. On the other hand, tolerance and non-discrimination cannot be used or interpreted in a way that would restrict the freedom of religion or belief or other fundamental freedoms.

The Holy See has a particular duty to insist on the centrality of the freedom of religion or belief, not because it ignores other freedoms, but because the freedom of religion or belief is the litmus test for the respect of all other human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Holy See is convinced that “belief” contributes, for both individuals and communities, to respect for freedom of thought, the search for truth, personal and social justice and the rule of law, all of which are necessary if there is to be a just relationship between citizens, institutions and States.

With regard to the equal rights of men and women, my Delegation firmly believes “that ‘male’ and ‘female’ differentiate two individuals of equal dignity, which does not however reflect a static equality, because the specificity of the female is different from the specificity of the male, and this difference in equality is enriching and indispensable for the harmony of life in society”... “Woman is the complement of man, as man is the complement of woman: man and woman complete each other mutually, not only from a physical and psychological point of view, but also ontologically. It is only because of the duality of ‘male’ and ‘female’ that the ‘human’ being becomes a full reality” (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Nos. 146-147). Therefore the Holy See supports those commitments directed to a true and authentic equality between woman and man, many of which still need to be fully implemented.

With regard to the second dimension, the economic and environmental, we should take into consideration that human beings are part of the environment. We live in communion with it, since the environment itself imposes ethical limits, which human activity must acknowledge and respect. Man, for all his remarkable gifts, which “are signs of a uniqueness which transcends the spheres of physics and biology” (*Laudato Si’*, 81), is at the same time a part of these spheres. In addition, every creature has an intrinsic value, in its existence, its life, its beauty and its interdependence with other creatures (cf. Address of the Holy Father at the Meeting with the members of the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization, United Nations Headquarters, New York, 25 September 2015).

The abuse and destruction of the environment are also accompanied by a relentless process of exclusion. Economic and social exclusion is a denial of human fraternity and a grave offence against human rights and the environment. The poorest are those who suffer most from such offences: they are cast off by society, forced to live off what is discarded and suffer unjustly from the abuse of the environment. They are part of today’s widespread and quietly growing “throw-away culture”.

Solemn commitments are no longer enough, although they are certainly a necessary step forwards. Our world demands of its leaders a political will which is effective, practical and constant, together with concrete steps and immediate actions for preserving and enhancing the natural environment and thus putting an end as quickly as

possible, to social and economic exclusion, with its tragic consequences: human trafficking, the marketing of human organs and tissues, the sexual exploitation of boys and girls, slave labour, including prostitution, the drug and weapons trade, terrorism and international organized crime.

In the current situation of conflict and terrorism mentioned earlier, the tools of the Organization, designed to defuse conflicts and restore a climate of trust and confidence between the participating States, have been tested in an unparalleled manner. Unfortunately, evidence shows that even the best tools are ineffective, if there is insufficient political will to implement them in good faith and if sincere dialogue is absent. We can only regret that, even recently, non-implementation of valuable tools that the OSCE possesses, such as the Vienna Document or the Code of Conduct, has prevented the emergence of the conditions necessary for the settlement of the ongoing crises.

Attempting to resolve disputes by resorting to the use of arms rather than by a sincere effort to find negotiated solutions is a sad development within our region. Pope Francis stated in his first Message for the World Day of Peace: "I appeal forcefully to all those who sow violence and death by force of arms: in the person you today see simply as an enemy to be beaten, discover rather your brother or sister, and hold back your hand! Give up the way of arms and go out to meet the other in dialogue, pardon and reconciliation, in order to rebuild justice, trust, and hope around you!" (*Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace*, n° 7; January 1, 2014).

In consideration of its particular nature and function, the Holy See supports and encourages constructive dialogue in the search for better solutions and instruments for maintaining peace and security. Following with attention the efforts undertaken by the OSCE to consolidate and preserve peace, and sharing the concerns over the deterioration in many sectors of those conditions of trust and security that have constituted the basis of relations and negotiations among participating States over the past years, it is encouraging to note that dialogue on the aspects of security within our organisation has never been interrupted and I am hopeful that it can increase and, with the good will of all involved, become more efficacious.

In the area of disarmament, the Holy See has taken note of the report of the Chairman of the Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC) on the activities carried out during 2015. In particular, the Holy See welcomes the achievements in strengthening the security of excessive stockpiles of small arms and light weapons, as well as conventional munitions.

In terms of the non-military aspects of security dealt with by the Security Committee, the Holy See values the efforts of the OSCE in strengthening co-ordination and coherence to address transnational threats, including the fight against terrorism; in combating the threat of illegal drugs and chemical precursors; in promoting a strategic framework for police-related activities; and in furthering measures in the area of cyber security. These have inherent value as a contribution to the protection of the rights of human beings.

In conclusion, I wish to renew to the Serbian Chairmanship my gratitude for its leadership and efforts exercised during this year, while to the incoming German Chairmanship I wish every success and assure the cooperation and support of the Holy See.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

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