



THE HOLY SEE

**Statement of the Most Reverend Antonio Cañizares
Archbishop of Toledo
Head of the Delegation of the Holy See
to the OSCE Conference on
Anti-Semitism and Other Forms of Intolerance
Cordoba, 8 June 2005
Opening Session**

Mr Chairman,

The Delegation of the Holy See wishes to express its congratulations to the Spanish Government for the commitment with which it has organized this Conference together with the Slovene Chairmanship.

1. In this emblematic city of Cordoba the OSCE is taking a new and important step in its struggle against anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance; last year important moments of this struggle were the Conferences of Berlin, Brussels and Paris and, subsequently the institution of three Personal Representatives of the Chairman in Office.

The Holy See supports his path and appreciates the desire to put into practice initiatives already underway and decisions adopted promoting the dignity of the human person.

2. History, even recent history, has shown what tragic consequences arise when this dignity is denied or when its acceptance is reduced to a mere formality while at the same time measures are enforced totally contrary to human rights, which find in that same dignity their foundation and goal.

As Pope John Paul II recalled on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp, *this attempt to destroy in a systematic way a whole people extends itself as a shadow over Europe and over the entire world; it is a crime which stains for ever the history of humanity.*

The terrible tragedy of the Holocaust is also a dramatic warning to educate, particularly the younger generations, not to give in to ideologies that justify the possibility of “trampling upon” human dignity on the basis of diversity of race, language, nation or religion.

The Catholic Church - the Second Vatican Council solemnly declared - *deplores all manifestations of anti-Semitism directed against Jews of any time from any source (Nostra Aetate, No. 4)*; she condemns discrimination and warns to flee from intolerance which almost invariably brings about the limitation of rights and freedom and can even end in marginalization and oppression of human persons and their communities.

The Holy See is pleased that inter-religious dialogue promotes tolerance, mutual recognition and, consequently, a form of coexistence between peoples that has become a factor of peace. Precisely so as to preserve such results, she warns against this dialogue being subordinated to aims that are merely practical and political. This subordination demeans God and man; it “mortifies” tolerance instead of promoting it, and measures it with the precarious and variable parameter of political convenience, instead of with the sure rule of truth and human dignity.

Mr Chairman,

3. The effectiveness of the OSCE’s action against discrimination and intolerance depends to a great degree on the credibility of such a commitment, and consequently on its “inclusive” character and its consistency with what has already been concluded and achieved.

Consequently the Delegation of the Holy See wishes to point out once again that, in the geographical area covered by this Organization, intolerance and discrimination against Christians and members of other religions are worrying realities which must be overcome with that same determination with which the struggle against anti-Semitism and discrimination against Muslims is carried on. It would indeed be paradoxical not to adopt those practical measures needed to guarantee to Christians and members of other religions the enjoyment of their religious freedom without any form of discrimination or intolerance, when at the very same time one seeks on a general level to combat discrimination and intolerance.

Moreover, it would be ill-advised to place anti-Semitism, discrimination against Muslims and against Christians in a sort of hierarchical order. Each one of these “plagues” “sickens” and degrades humanity and must be properly “cured”. So as to avoid eventual reticence or unjustified selective actions on the part of member States, a correct balance must be ensured between the commitments adopted by them in the full context of the three directions just mentioned.

The Holy See is consequently hopeful that the Conference of Cordoba will be a favorable occasion for the OSCE to commit itself to establish effective tools and mechanisms to fight against prejudices and misrepresentations of Christians and members of other religions in the media and through education. The Holy See wishes also that the Cordoba Conference will engage the OSCE to promote the effective contribution of Churches and religious communities to the public life of States.

The Holy See will continue its cooperation with the OSCE so that the commitment against anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance, especially in the religious sphere, will protect and advance human dignity, which is at the centre of the great causes championed by this Organization.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.