



Associazione culturale “**Giuseppe Dossetti: i Valori**”
TUTELA E SVILUPPO DEI DIRITTI

Osservatorio per la Tolleranza e la Libertà Religiosa
 Observatory for Religious Tolerance and Freedom

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Before speaking about the implementation of commitments related to freedom of religion or belief, I would draw your attention to the linkage between these commitments and the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination. One of the lessons learned from Tirana Conference – as pointed out by the EU Delegation in its closing remarks – is that “in promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelation of human rights and OSCE human dimension commitments should be kept in mind. The implementation of commitments on religious tolerance and non-discrimination goes hand in hand with the respect for fundamental freedoms, especially freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression. If one of them is lacking, the other one cannot be fully achieved and vice versa. On the other hand, tolerance and non-discrimination commitments cannot be used or interpreted in a way that could restrict freedom of religion or belief and all other fundamental freedoms”.

Commitments on preventing and combating intolerance and discrimination cannot be considered apart from the longstanding commitments on freedom of religion or belief: tolerance cannot be an alibi for lacking in implementation of commitments and freedom cannot be sacrificed on the altar of tolerance. At this regard let me note that certain anti-discrimination legislations adopted by participating States seem to be in contrast with the OSCE commitments, because such laws do not take into serious account the autonomy of the religious communities, preventing the latter to organize themselves and to act in accordance with their beliefs and interests.

Another lesson learned from Tirana Conference is that it has become out-dated to talk about minority and majority religions. As the Ministerial Council Decision No. 9/09 already pointed out, episodes of intolerance and discrimination affect both minorities and majorities. A hierarchical approach – implying that violations against majority religions are less serious than those against



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minorities – would be improper: the inherent dignity of the human person is equally violated.

Finally it should be noted that if freedom of religion or belief rightly protects also the non-believers, an anti-religious atheism which preaches the need to remove the religion from public life should not be welcomed. In this respect I find appropriate to remember that during the CSCE Follow-up Meeting of Vienna it was not reached the *consensus* on the proposal WT.78 that would put the right of practicing religion on the same footing of the preaching of atheism that asks to eradicate and prevent the propagation of religion. A similar approach would be at odds with the very concept of religious freedom provided by the OSCE commitments, which protect the religious phenomenon as such.