



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

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

**OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting
 Prevention on Racism, Xenophobia and Hate Crimes Through
 Educational and Awareness-Raising Initiatives**
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**Session I: Challenges and Perspectives for the
 Prevention of Racism and Xenophobia**

Statement by Dr. Mattia F. Ferrero
 Coordinator of the
Observatory for Religious Tolerance and Freedom
Associazione “Dossetti: i Valori”
 (Italy)

Despite many commitments adopted by the participating States, in the OSCE Area many persons and groups are subject to threats or acts of discrimination, hostility or violence as a result of their racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity.

We all view with appreciation the efforts of the ODIHR and of the three Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office to combat racism, xenophobia and discrimination, but much work is still to be done. Therefore it is important to focus on fulfilling the existing commitments instead to pay attention to other issues out the boundaries of the OSCE *acquis*. In order to facilitate this process my Observatory also suggest that Chairmanship-in-Office appoint a fourth Personal Representative on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination.

Episodes of religion-based intolerance and discrimination – including hate-motivated incidents and hate crimes – easily fuel xenophobia and racism. They occur in the whole OSCE Region, both East and West of Vienna, and affect not only minorities but also majorities communities, as was acknowledged by the Ministerial Council in its Decision 9/09. A hierarchy between East and West of Vienna or between minorities and majorities would be improper: everyone of such episodes is a breach of the inherent dignity of the human person.

We should also bear in mind that tolerance and non-discrimination go hand by hand with human rights and fundamental freedoms. If the latter lack, the former cannot be fully achieved and vice versa. Moreover I would point out that primary responsibility rests with the participating



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States: this means that it is not satisfactory that they are not racist, xenophobic or violent themselves but they have a positive duty to protect their citizens against any act committed by third parties and to punish the perpetrators.

Finally let me note with regret that it is more and more widespread the false idea that religions are a negative fact instead a positive factor for our democracies’ building and for promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination.

In many participating States there is a growing opposition to the public role of religion, which in some cases has resulted in the exclusion of the religion and its symbols from public life. As was noted by the UN Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, “it’s regrettable that societies with high level of income and education have openly expressed their aversion to see religious symbols in public”.

If the 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. A similar approach would be at odds with the very concept of religious freedom provided by the OSCE commitments, which recognize the enriching and positive contribution that religion can make to a harmonious pluralistic society.

Dr. Mattia F. Ferrero

Coordinator

Associazione “Dossetti: i Valori” - Observatory for Religious Freedom and Tolerance

Corso Monforte, 2
I-20122 MILANO
ITALIA - ITALY

e-mail: mattia.ferrero@unicatt.it
Phone: +39-02-89452122
Fax: +39-02-89452125