



Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 22 September - 3 October 2014

Working Session 14:

Fundamental freedoms II, including freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief

Warsaw, 1 October 2014

Statement of the Swiss Delegation

Mr. Moderator,

As a strong defender of dialogue and cooperation, Switzerland calls on all participating States to promote the peaceful coexistence of different cultures, religions and faiths. In this context, Switzerland condemns in the strongest possible terms all forms of incitement to religious hatred. Hatred begets hatred and violence begets violence which is why only dialogue can be the solution.

After a popular initiative to ban the building of minarets was approved in my country the Swiss administration and representatives of the Muslim community initiated a sustained and inclusive dialogue. With the aim of contributing to the empowerment of Swiss Muslims, the Federal Commission against Racism sought the assistance of ODIHR. Jointly, we invited all Muslim community representatives to discuss the foundation of a Muslim “umbrella organization” and to assess the community’s specific needs in the aftermath of this decision.

Switzerland has repeatedly called on all participating States to fully implement OSCE commitments, including those on the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief. Civil society, interreligious councils, and religious leaders contribute actively to this end. Promoting dialogue and deepening the civil society is our priority as OSCE Chairmanship. In this spirit, Switzerland engaged this year with the European Council of Religious Leaders and is a firm supporter of ODIHR's Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

Switzerland calls on all participating States as well as all religious and civil society leaders alike to speak out to prevent sectarian violence and to promote tolerance and mutual respect.

Thank you Mr. Moderator
