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ENGLISH only

European Network of Communities
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to the

**Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting
Freedom of Religion or Belief, Fostering Mutual Respect and
Understanding**

**Session I: Freedom of Religion or Belief and Fostering Mutual Respect
and Understanding in the OSCE area – Opportunities and Challenges**

Vienna, 2 July 2015

Referring to the introductory statement of Mr. Jacob Finci – related to his remark on diversity in unity, I want to make a spontaneous remark: In the European Network of Communities that represents a network of communities with members from different Christian Faiths, the following has been and is a key ingredient in working together:

- the willingness and ability to ask for forgiveness
- the willingness and ability to accept such request

And of course this will work only when it is not one-sided.

Coming back from a recent network meeting we have received a worrying report from the UK and we would like to take one incident as an example to show difficulties related to Anti-Discrimination legislation and Freedom of Religion or Belief:

A small Christian-run backing company had refused to make a cake with a pro-gay marriage slogan. A judge has ruled – in May 2015 - that the bakery discriminated against the gay customer by refusing to make this cake with a pro-gay marriage slogan.

The owners of the bakery followed their religious convictions and exercised their right to freedom of religion and belief, by not baking a cake containing motives going against their religious convictions. Because of that they were forced to pay a fine of £500 (five hundred Pounds Sterling).

In this case the judge considered Anti-Discrimination Legislation was superior to the Freedom of Religion or Belief.

This is very problematic and cannot be accepted. This case is just one example of a number of similar cases being reported.

Therefore we recommend to the participating states:

- to assess Anti-Discrimination legislation and to make sure that it does not force Christians into conflict with their moral or religious belief or practice
- to ensure that the exercise of freedom of religion, freedom of expression and freedom of assembly for Christians is possible and not limited by Anti-Discrimination legislation

We recommend to OSCE/ODIHR:

- to monitor Anti-Discrimination legislation in participating states with a focus when it is in conflict with Freedom of Religion and Belief
- to continue the debate on religious freedom through conferences, work days and events similar to the one we are participating in today
- to recommend to the European Union **not to adopt another equal treatment directive** (some refer to it as the 5th equal treatment directive) **extending the scope of anti-discrimination legislation to goods and services** as it would put freedom of religion and belief at risk