



OSCE Baku Conference on  
The Role of Religion and Belief in a Democratic Society:  
Searching for ways to Combat Terrorism and Extremism

## Conclusions and Recommendations:

During a day and a half of Plenary Meetings and Working Sessions, representatives of OSCE participating States, OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation, non-governmental organizations and religious and spiritual leaders from the OSCE Region and other states of the Great Silk Route met in Baku, Azerbaijan, October 10-11, 2002, to discuss the role of religion and belief in a democratic society and the search for ways to combat terrorism and extremism.

Participants began their discussions with a common basis of several agreed documents, including the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and other relevant United Nations documents on tolerance, freedom of religion or belief including the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action of 1983 and the Durban Declaration and Program of Action of 2001, as well as OSCE Commitments on freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief as contained in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and numerous subsequent documents.

They also shared common support for United Nations Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001) of 28 September 2001 and 1377 (2001) of 12 November 2001, as well as General Assembly Resolution 56/1 and the decisions and program of action decided at the Bucharest Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council and the Bishkek Conference on Terrorism of 2001, as a basis and framework for international co-operation to prevent and combat terrorism.

Participants at the Baku Conference agreed that:

- religion and belief has an important role to play in modern and democratic societies, for the individual and for society as a whole,
- the recourse to terrorism under the name of religion does not demonstrate a clash of cultures, but a clash based on ignorance,

- all religions and similar beliefs preach tolerance and respect for the inherent humanity of all persons, and that violence and terrorism are incompatible with the authentic spirit of religion,
- it is essential, in the fight against terrorism, for states and individuals to respect fully all human rights, and the freedom of religion and belief in particular,
- they resolutely reject any attempt to justify terrorism and extremism on any political, religious, economic and social grounds,
- just as religion may wrongly be used to justify terrorism, so can “anti-terrorism” actions of governments wrongly be used to justify actions that undermine human rights and freedom of religion or belief,
- they reject firmly the identification of terrorism with any particular religion or culture and stress that neither terrorist activities nor the antiterrorist fight may be presented as a struggle for or against any religion or culture,
- terrorism and extremism destroy the rule of law, human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy, and threaten peace and security,
- armed conflict undermines the security and stability of the OSCE region and can create obstacles to the promotion and development of inter-religious and intercultural dialogue,
- persistent armed conflicts have been interlinked with terrorism in various regions of the OSCE area and conflict zones can serve as safe havens for terrorists,
- diverse, multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural societies are an essential and invaluable achievement of civilization and contribute to peace and strengthen relations between nations,
- respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States, for the rule of law and for human rights will contribute to the global fight against terrorism and the maintenance of international peace and security,

Further, the participants discussed the following Recommended Actions:

- measures by States to combat terrorism must be consistent with the requirements of democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. They must be directed exclusively at the

perpetrators of terrorist acts and their accomplices and not against any national, ethnic or religious community as such;

- there must not be any double standards or selectivity on political, ethnic and religious grounds in interpreting acts and manifestations of terrorism in various regions of the world;
- the incitement to inter-religious discord and hatred, and the practice by some of providing ideological and spiritual motivation to a dispute, are extremely dangerous and inadmissible, and religious institutions and organizations should contribute actively to peaceful settlement of conflicts;
- the dignity and values of all religions or beliefs belonging to the human heritage should be respected, and all States should prevent propagation in education programs of ideas based on religious hatred and discrimination;
- it is important for States to create favorable conditions in educational policies to promote the principles of mutual respect, and the protection and preservation of these values, and to ensure they pass from generation to generation;
- all States should establish and apply educational policies to strengthen the eradication of prejudices and misconceptions in the field of freedom of religion or belief, with a view to ensuring respect for pluralism and the acceptance of diversity in the field of religion or belief;
- education in the field of freedom of religion or belief should also contribute to the goals of peace, social justice, mutual respect and friendship among peoples, to the elimination of ideologies or practices of intolerance and discrimination based on religion and belief, and to promotion of the freedoms of opinion, expression and research as well as to the respect of pluralism and a greater acceptance of diversity;
- violent or any other forced religious and cultural assimilation is inadmissible and all States should promote conditions in which all members of diverse, multiethnic, and multicultural societies can express their cultural identity and manifest their religious beliefs, subject only to such strict limitations as are provided for in international law;
- all States should take measures to eliminate the possibility for any organization, group or individual to incite religious hatred and violence;
- all States should promote careful preservation of cultural and religious monuments and punish those responsible for acts aimed at the destruction of properties of cultural and religious heritage;

- States and individuals should address, at the earliest possible moment, the social, economic, and political factors that engender conditions in which terrorist organizations are able to recruit and win support;
- it is important, for the promotion of common universal values such as those enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Helsinki Final Act and other relevant international human rights instruments, for States to foster dialogue among and peaceful relations between religions and cultures and to facilitate dialogue with religious organizations;
- the OSCE participating States should make more use of the ODIHR Advisory Panel on Freedom of Religion or Belief, and should consider establishment of a Special Representative on Freedom of Religion and Belief;
- inter-religious and intercultural dialogue remain essential within the OSCE region and the area of the Great Silk Route and elsewhere and should be developed to establish trust and consolidate the fight against terrorism; and

Finally, the participants agreed that

- the Baku Conference provided an important opportunity for governments, spiritual leaders and civil society representatives to meet and to discuss ways in which they should cooperate to ensure religion and belief play their proper, positive role in the fight against terrorism, and they expressed the wish that similar meetings be organized again in the future, preferably under OSCE auspices, and that
- these common positions should be brought to the attention of the OSCE Permanent Council, as the Baku Conference's contribution to preparations for the discussion of the fight against terrorism at the Ministerial Council in Porto this coming December.

Baku, 11 October 2002