



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE HOLY SEE  
TO THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY  
AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

**STATEMENT BY MONSIGNOR MICHAEL W. BANACH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HOLY SEE,  
AT THE 737<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

**30 OCTOBER 2008**

**RE: REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE  
FOR DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

Mister Chairman:

1. The Delegation of the Holy See willingly joins other speakers in warmly welcoming back Ambassador Janez Lenarčič to the Permanent Council, albeit in his first appearance as the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and thanks him for his report.

2. Ambassador Lenarčič's Report, a veritable *tour de horizon*, indicates how in his first 122 days in office he has dedicated himself fully, and with enthusiasm and professionalism, to the various areas of the mandate of the ODIHR.

My Delegation would like to note with appreciation Ambassador Lenarčič's assurances that the "*commitments will continue to be the baseline and serve as a guidance in the future work of the ODIHR, without inventing anything new, since the work has already been done*".

3. In this vein, my Delegation would like to recall that the OSCE has committed itself to fight intolerance and discrimination against Christians and members of other religions. Hate crimes, as well as incidents of intolerance and discrimination against Christians and members of other religions, continue to be witnessed throughout the OSCE region and beyond. The recent outbreak of violence in India and in Iraq, sexual harassment of women religious, the murder

of Catholic priests and religious personnel, as well as the violence against Christians that continue to take place in those countries and in OSCE countries are a sobering reminder of that reality. Often these crimes happen without adequate responses from government authorities. Indeed, in some regions it is the civic authorities themselves who open the door to hate motivated crimes and intolerance against Christians. In line with this awareness, we would like to see the Annual ODIHR Report on Hate Crimes give greater consideration to the incidents against Christians that take place in the OSCE region.

Next year the Holy See would like to see respect for human rights in the fight against terrorism and the rule of law discussed in Human Dimension meetings. We would not accept to discuss the issue of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the fight against hate crimes, as suggested by some Delegations, as this is not one of the commitments of the Organization. The scarcity of available economic resources, also on account of the present economic and financial crisis, demands a greater focus of the work of the Organization and its priorities on those areas where it can truly have added value.

**5.** In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, my Delegation would like to wish Ambassador Lenarčič every success in carrying out the mandate entrusted to him by the Permanent Council, as well as to assure him of the willingness of my Delegation to engage in constructive dialogue with his office.

Thank you, Mister Chairman!