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OSCE Human Dimension Meeting – Austria, Vienna
Working Session 1. Freedom of religion or belief, non-discrimination and other human rights and fundamental freedoms as the essential normative basis for peaceful coexistence and security in the OSCE region.

**Statement of Francesco Di Lillo, Head of the European Union Office of
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints**

Madam/Mr. Chair, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Participants,

The preservation of the basic freedoms enshrined in the UN Declaration of Human Rights is essential for a vibrant and peaceful co-existence. It is these freedoms that have allowed human civilization to flourish both socially and economically when protected. In the areas of government restriction, workplace regulations and social hostilities, religious freedom is often the least protected of these values. The contention created by religious intolerance is one of the primary factors of insecurity in the OSCE region.

To coexist peacefully with those who may not look like us, talk like us, or believe like us, we must protect their right, and our right, to practice our respective faiths. This mutual respect can only lead to peace, whereas mutual intolerance based on fear and discrimination will only lead to an escalation of conflict. Elder Dallin H. Oaks, a leader of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints said, “We must also practice tolerance and respect toward others. As the Apostle Paul taught, [we] should “follow after the things that make for peace” (Rom. 14:19), and as much as possible “live peaceably with all men” (Rom.

THE CHURCH OF
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OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

12:18). Consequently, we should be alert to honour the good in all people and in many opinions and practices that differ from our own.”

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints encourages participating states, organizations, and individuals represented today at this crucial meeting:

1. To consider the consequences, great and small, that derive from policies and approaches that favor intolerance, discrimination, and threaten Freedom of religion or belief. May participating States work co-operatively together with civil society and religious organisations, in a spirit of unity for these long-regarded values in cultivating a spirit of peace among all nations.
2. We invite leaders and citizens everywhere to affirm the importance of Freedom of religion or belief as a fundamental freedom and work individually and collectively to protect it not only in the private sphere but in the public sphere. Together we can find reasonable ways to negotiate conscience claims that may conflict with one another.

Thank you.