



THE HOLY SEE
Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting
“Prevention of Racism, Xenophobia and Hate Crimes Through
Educational and Awareness-Raising Initiatives”
Session 3: Education for Tolerance and Mutual Respect and Understanding:
Good Practices from IGOs, Governments and Civil Society
Friday, November 11, 2011

Mr. Chairman,

1. The Holy See recognizes and wishes to underscore the fundamental role of education in the fight against racism and xenophobia. Such education must begin in the family. It is in the family that the child first understands the concept of the other. It is in the family that the other becomes truly a brother or sister. The family itself must be the first community of openness, welcome and solidarity. The family must be the first school in which the roots of racist behaviour are firmly rejected.

2. Education against racial intolerance must become a clear pillar of all dimensions of education, both in the school and in broader society. Such an education must address the ethical foundations which enhance the unity of the human family.

A special responsibility rests with those who have responsibility for the formation of public opinion. Mass media have a special responsibility to avoid any provocation of racism sentiments. All forms of racial stereotyping or efforts at inciting rejection or hatred through racial discrimination must be rejected right from their first appearance.

Human rights education must become a fundamental dimension of educational programmes, as well as in the professional formation of certain categories whose work can help prevent racial discrimination, such as mass media, or which have a special responsibility to protect victims, such as the judiciary or law enforcement officers.

3. The Catholic Church, for example, has not spared its best energies to strengthen its many scholastic institutions, to establish new ones, to be present in dangerous situations where human dignity is trampled upon and the local community is disrupted. In this vast educational network, it teaches how to live together and how to recognize that any form of racial prejudice and discrimination hurts the common dignity of every person created in the image of God and the development of a just and welcoming society.

4. The Holy See has, finally, especially addressed the contribution and the responsibility of religious communities in the fight against racism and xenophobia. In his Address to the participants at Meeting for Peace in Assisi, held at the end of October, Pope Benedict XVI, reflecting on the incompatibility of religion and violence, clearly denounced religious terrorism describing it as “the antithesis of religion” which “contributes to its destruction.” He went on to state that “the God in whom we Christians believe is the Creator and Father of all, and from him all people are brothers and sisters and form one single family.”

Religion has all too often been exploited as a means to further deepen existing political, economic or social divisions. Religious leaders must recall that all religions by their nature appeal to the unity of the human race. True religious belief is absolutely incompatible with racist attitudes and racist practices. Recent experiences of inter-religious dialogue offer the hope of greater understanding among religions. In many recent conflicts, in fact, the unity shown by religious leaders has been a significant factor in preventing or reducing conflict and in fostering reconciliation.

Thank you, Mister Chairperson.