



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 746<sup>th</sup> (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

**15 JANUARY 2009**

**RE: ADDRESS OF THE CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE OF THE OSCE,  
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GREECE,  
H.E. DORA BAKOYANNIS**

Madame Chair:

1. The Holy See joins other Delegations in welcoming H.E. Dora Bakoyannis to the Permanent Council and in congratulating her on the assumption of her duties as 2009 Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE. Congratulations also to you, Ambassador Marinaki, and to your co-workers!

2. The establishment of full diplomatic relations between the Hellenic Republic and the Holy See dates back only to 1980. However, the contact between Greece and Christianity has a longer history. The mighty figure of Saint Paul towers over the two millennia of Christian history; his memory is etched for ever in the soil of Greece. It was in Athens that Paul founded one of the first communities of his voyages in the West and of his mission on the European continent. There he worked tirelessly to preach the Gospel; there he suffered for the proclamation of the Gospel. And how can we not recall that it was in the city of Athens that there began the dialogue between the Christian message and Hellenistic culture, a dialogue which would decisively shape European civilization?

3. As is known, through its diplomatic activity the Holy See seeks to render a quite particular service to the human family. This is a service motivated not by any national interest, nor by narrowly partisan views, but by concern for the common good of all peoples and nations. Nowadays, diplomacy must also face the challenges presented by globalization in order to overcome threats to peace and development

such as the poverty of countless human beings, social inequalities, ethnic tensions, environmental pollution and respect for human rights and political freedom. These are the prime threats to stability and they are the questions which diplomacy needs to address.

Society needs a coherent vision which embraces both the dignity and inalienable rights of each individual, especially the weakest and most vulnerable, and a clear consciousness of the fundamental values and relationships which ultimately constitute the common good. It is this vision which the Holy See seeks to promote through its diplomatic activity.

4. Greek culture has been a vital element in the shaping of European society down to our own days, and today Greece has a vital role to play in the process of integration now taking place in Europe. In the international arena, Greece's efforts to promote peace and reconciliation, especially in the surrounding area of the Mediterranean, are noteworthy. She can quell tensions and dispel the clouds of suspicion which have long stood in the way of a fully harmonious coexistence in the region and this will help to foster a spirit of goodwill between individuals and nations. A spirit capable of inspiring, bringing to fulfilment the Greek ideal of the *cosmopolis* in a world which is truly united and imbued with justice and fraternity.

Madame Chair:

5. *Pànton chrimàton mètron ànthropos*. This insight of the pre-Socratic philosopher Protagoras remains as valid today as when pronounced in the fifth century B.C. : *man is the measure of all things*. This leads to an authentic humanism which flows from the truth of the human person who, according to the Catholic Church, is created in the image of God and therefore possessing an inviolable dignity and inalienable rights, including the fundamental right to religious freedom. From this vision of the human person there rises that true and noble concept of human society which recognizes that we are responsible for one another, and which therefore demands an ethic of solidarity. This is why it becomes especially urgent to construct an ever more deeply rooted ethic of solidarity and culture of dialogue, since these alone are the path to a peaceful future. Geography and history have set Greece between East and West, and this means that Greece's natural vocation is to build bridges and a culture of dialogue.

6. Minister Bakoyannis: As you assume your responsibilities as 2009 Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, I offer you good wishes for the success of your mission. May your mission serve to strengthen the bonds of understanding and friendship between Greece and the Holy See; may it also contribute to promoting further the good of all individuals, of all nations and of all peoples – “from Vancouver to Vladivostok”.

Thank you, Madame Chair!