

## CHAIRMANSHIP IN OFFICE CONCLUSIONS

### *Freedom of Religion and Belief, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination*

The **2018 Italian OSCE Chairmanship in Office** has devoted particular attention, in the course of its mandate, to countering all forms of racism, xenophobia, intolerance and discrimination, including those based on religious grounds. This approach was aimed at protecting and fostering freedom of religion and belief, in all its manifestations, as a fundamental human right. Uprooting religious and belief persecutions and discriminations does remain the prerequisite for any peaceful coexistence among peoples and States.

On **29 January 2018**, the Italian OSCE Chairmanship organized in Rome the **Conference on the fight against Antisemitism in the OSCE area**. The event gathered **Ministers** and high level representatives of the governments of the OSCE participating States and OSCE Partners for Cooperation, senior officials of international institutions, representatives from religious communities as well as academia and experts, to discuss best practices in combating crimes based on antisemitism and further engage in promoting a culture of tolerance and non-discrimination. Participants also discussed current issues in the field of antisemitism related to religion, media and social media, sport and education.

On **22 October 2018**, the Italian OSCE Chairmanship in Office and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) organized in Rome the **Conference on the fight against intolerance and discrimination with focus on religious grounds**.

The Conference was structured according to **holistic and inclusive criteria**, aimed at highlighting the endeavour of the Italian Chairmanship to combat discrimination and intolerance, with focus on religious ground, and with the primary objective of **promoting a positive agenda and constructive narratives**. The event was characterized by a strong and active participation of OSCE delegations, experts and academics.

These Conferences were organized with the view of confirming and developing further OSCE commitments on these matters. This was especially motivated by the growing concern that intolerance and discrimination, including on religious grounds, as well as hate crimes and hate speech, pose a serious threat to the security of individuals and to social cohesion, while they may even lead to conflict and violence on a wider scale.

On the basis of the debate and outcome of the two Conferences organized by the Italian OSCE Chairmanship in Office, on the wider topic of Freedom of Religion and Belief and fight against Intolerance and Discrimination, the following conclusions emerged:

- The strongest condemnation of **all manifestations of antisemitism, discrimination against Christians and Muslims** and other forms of discrimination throughout the OSCE area.
- The utmost concern at the **alarming number of hate crimes incidents** that continue to take place in the OSCE area and **remain a challenge to stability and security**.

- The further commitment to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, as enshrined in the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and in following OSCE documents.
- A vibrant call on political and religious leaders as well as civil society to engage in open and cooperative discussion with the aim to combating and preventing antisemitism, discrimination against Christians and Muslims, with a **comprehensive and holistic approach, while fully respecting all fundamental freedoms and human rights.**
- A passionate appeal to promote **educational programmes for combating anti-Semitism, discrimination against Christians and Muslims and other forms of religious and belief discrimination** as well as to provide young people with opportunities for human rights education, including on the subject of the contrast to hate crimes and hate speech, offline and online.
- The acknowledgment that it is fundamental to increase efforts to **implement existing OSCE commitments** related to monitoring hate crimes and collecting relevant data, including those motivated by xenophobia, racism, intolerance and discrimination grounds.
- The warmest encouragement of initiatives to promote and facilitate **open and transparent intercultural, interfaith and interreligious dialogue and partnerships**, also through the **inclusion and engagement of religious and belief communities in public discussions** of best practices and pertinent legislative initiatives, as partners in building long term strategies to advance freedom of religion and belief for all and foster pluralism, social cohesion and sustainable peace.

*Milan, 7 December 2018*

**Italian OSCE Chairmanship in Office**