



2024 Warsaw Human Dimension Conference
Opening Session
Warsaw, 30 September 2024

STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE

Madam Moderator,

The Holy See is pleased to take part in this 2024 Warsaw Human Dimension Conference and wishes to thank Poland, our host country, for its hospitality, as well as the Maltese Chairmanship-in-Office and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), for planning and organising this Conference.

At the same time, my Delegation wishes to express again its regret that consensus was not reached on the relevant decisions pertaining to the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. We need to consider why consensus so often eludes us in the “third basket”. In fact, this *status quo* that has persisted for years reflects not only the general political situation or some unresolved details, but more substantial disagreements on the very understanding or interpretation of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

My Delegation has often expressed its concern about the consequences of those approaches that tend to remove rights from their proper context, that restrict the range of their application or that permit the meaning and interpretation of them to vary and their universality to be denied. In this sense, it is against the fundamental rule of consensus and the principle of sovereign equality among participating States to treat the interpretation of the OSCE commitments held by some States or groups as though they were agreed upon by consensus and to act in accordance with these positions.

Such approaches, not unlike the one that considers human rights and fundamental freedoms as privileges granted by the State (which could then be subsequently withdrawn whenever the authority pleases), tend to create “categories” of rights and rights-holders, undercutting the very idea of the “universality” of human rights. To this end, it is

important that the term “human right” be exactly and prudently applied so that it does not become a rhetorical catch-all that is endlessly expanded to suit the passing whims of the age.

The lack of such a shared understanding has consequences also for security and cooperation among States. Pope Francis noted this when he pointed out that “in recent decades attempts have been made to introduce new rights that are neither fully consistent with those originally defined nor always acceptable. They have led to instances of ideological colonization (...). These instances of ideological colonization prove injurious and create divisions between states, rather than fostering peace.”¹

The Holy See believes that a new approach is needed. My Delegation is convinced that it is necessary to unite around a common understanding of OSCE commitments in the “third basket”, as well as on the universal principles of human rights and fundamental freedoms that underpin the human dimension. If we want to achieve tangible results and progress, it is of the utmost importance to focus on the consensually agreed commitments of our Organization, rather than introducing concepts that may prove divisive.

Thank you, Madam Moderator.

¹ POPE FRANCIS, *Address to the members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See*, 8 January 2024.