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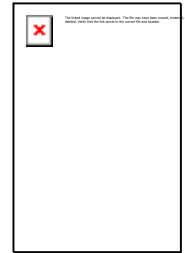
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“Raising the New Generation with a Foundation of Values and Tradition: Religious Perspectives”,

It is a great honour for me to represent the Council of Europe here today at this 8th Annual Conference of the Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue.

The conference theme, “Raising the New Generation with a Foundation of Values and Tradition: Religious Perspectives”, struck a particular chord with the Council of Europe, which has placed intercultural dialogue, including its religious aspects, at the heart of its concerns and its work on democracy, human rights and the rule of law, which are the Council of Europe’s fundamental values.

2008 was an especially rich and productive year for the Council of Europe in the area of intercultural dialogue. It took four main steps in this field:

The first was the adoption by the Committee of Ministers, the Organisation’s highest authority, of the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. The sub-title of this document – “Living Together as Equals in Dignity”– sums up in a few words the idea of a peaceable democratic society in pursuance of which the Council of Europe offers its sixty years of experience, expertise and exchange.

The White Paper sets out standards for the management of cultural and religious diversity and describes how our governance bodies, our education and youth policies and our policies on social and cultural affairs, civil society, religious communities and the media might provide new answers to the questions that are being raised by an increasingly multicultural Europe.

The White Paper has become a kind of bestseller as it already exists in 15 language

versions including Arabic and Hebrew, which is very symbolic. The main keys to establishing a dialogue are to understand one another then to understand what we are talking about.

The second step in 2008 was the launch of the “Speak Out Against Discrimination” Campaign, of which I am the co-ordinator and which has been running in the 47 member states of the Council of Europe for the last two years. The campaign draws its mandate from the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue and its distinctive nature from the target group it addresses, namely media professionals, with the aim of combating discrimination and fostering intercultural dialogue.

The main aim of the Campaign is to work with, for and through media professionals, with the Council of Europe chiefly acting as a facilitator in this process. It was conceived of, and is run, as a genuine partnership with the journalists and media organisations of the 47 Council of Europe member states, and it supports the media sector’s own efforts to play a constructive role in an increasingly multicultural environment.

“Fighting discrimination is a collective responsibility but it is also down to individuals”. This is the message of the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. The broad consultation which preceded the preparation of this document endorsed the firm belief that the media has a decisive role to play in combating discrimination and fostering intercultural dialogue, as they are directly involved in keeping the public informed and forming public opinion.

While fully respecting the independence and autonomy of media professionals and media organisations, the campaign pursues three interrelated objectives, namely training media professionals in cultural diversity and an intercultural approach, writing about, seeing and hearing diversity in the media and producing and disseminating intercultural information through the media.

It can never be repeated too often that in the 47 Council of Europe member states “Discrimination is a crime”. Protocol No. 12 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which is one of the Council’s fundamental documents, includes a general prohibition of discrimination on any ground. The first step to combating discrimination

is to open up one's mind and thoughts to others, whatever their ethnic, religious or social background, and ultimately to overcome one's prejudices.

The Campaign was intended to serve as a discussion forum centring on its "Speak Out Against Discrimination" slogan. As such it has provided us with some excellent examples of the benefits of dialogue leading on to activities fostering mutual understanding such as the International Journalism Symposium, which the Council of Europe is due to host again this year for the second time, the workshop in Coimbra at the beginning of September, where an education pack for teachers at European colleges and institutes of journalism was finalised, and the "Differing Viewpoints" media production workshops launched in Seville in 2009, the much anticipated last one of which will be held in Istanbul from 29 November to 3 December under the Turkish chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers.

The media industry has a duty to reflect the diversity of the society in which it operates. More so than any one-off campaign, the media can make daily contributions to social cohesion by alerting the public to examples of discrimination and creating the conditions for a public debate which can foster mutual understanding between communities.

This Campaign is the first of its type at the Council of Europe. Every contact we have with our partners in the media sector shows us both how urgent it is to come up with a suitable response to the enormous expectations in this field and the energy that is being put into the process, both by the authorities and by the media themselves.

Another reason why the partnership has been working so well over the last two years is that the Council of Europe has, since its very foundation, been such an ardent advocate of freedom of expression and the freedom of journalists to do their job. This aim is echoed here in Doha, where a Centre for the Freedom of the Media was established in 2007.

For 60 years, the Council of Europe has been the home of freedom of expression. It is so precious to the Council that in 1950 it was enshrined in our fundamental text, the European Convention on Human Rights, forming the subject of Article 10. Since then, it has been consistently reiterated in the case-law of the European Court of Human

Rights.

From their day-to-day experience, media professionals are fully aware of how fragile the balance is between rights and responsibility in the news industry. In the Council of Europe's view quality information is information which respects both the freedom of the person providing it and the dignity of the person receiving it.

I would now like to talk about a third measure taken by the Council of Europe in 2008, which was the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education.

This Recommendation is a reference framework for the implementation of the concept of "living together" and its social aspects. It refers in particular to schools and the conclusions of the Steering Committee for Education's (CDED) project of 2002-2005 on "The new challenge to intercultural education: religious diversity and dialogue in Europe", but also implies a lifelong approach to education.

Focusing mainly on school, the Recommendation suggests some practical ways of dealing with the issue of religions and non-religious convictions at school:

- promoting a model of schooling that is inclusive, open to all and free from discrimination; the kind of school that sees diversity of belief not as a problem but rather as part of the solution;
- introducing new teaching methods and approaches, such as co-operative learning, the phenomenological approach, multiperspectivity, the dialogical approach and the contextual approach;
- developing intercultural competences as a key part of the in-service training of teaching staff (such as the "Pestalozzi" programme).

The Recommendation takes an innovative, pragmatic approach to education policies. It calls for religious diversity and non-religious convictions to be treated as components of intercultural dialogue. This contribution may be summarised in the form of five key messages:

1. Moral, civic and religious convictions have a decisive influence on social cohesion, civic participation and democratic citizenship. Comparative studies and European surveys (such as EVS, ESVS and Eurobarometer) show that young people have little interest in social issues and/or are disinclined to become involved in the democratic process.

Likewise, research and public opinion indicate that there are problems in terms of commitment to values, and the adoption and development of these values through curricula (unlike in the case of the quest for knowledge).

2. The core values of the Council of Europe (respect for human rights, pluralism and the rule of law) are valid reference points, universally accepted in Europe, and the experience acquired and institutional system built up by the Council of Europe should be the starting point for any attempt to develop values education (including activities to clarify values).
3. World views and moral, civic and religious values are transmitted gradually, within a social fabric of which school forms an integral part. It involves individual stories, shared experiences and a gradual understanding of the world. Educating people about beliefs requires more than simply formal didactic transmission. In this personal development process, convictions are not entirely predefined by one's family or community.
4. Religion and non-religious convictions are a dimension of intercultural education, in the sense that they are important factors in affiliation and identification, in the same way as other sources of identity such as language, history and cultural heritage. In this sense, religious, humanist, philosophical and moral convictions are a cultural phenomenon, a separate aspect of culture and social activity. This approach allows a common basis for intercultural dialogue to be found, one that transcends the usual divisions between theories and doctrines.
5. The Recommendation is aimed at a range of stakeholders and educational institutions. These include not only school, of course, but also NGOs, families, cultural institutions, youth centres, the media and other "spaces for intercultural dialogue" (as referred to in Chapter 4 of the White Paper).

Religious communities are invited to participate in this process, particularly as parties to the “institutional partnerships” recommended by the Prague Forum (November 2007) and the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education (Ljubljana, May 2010).

The last, and by no means the least, step taken in 2008 was the launch of the annual Exchanges on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue, which was organised by the Council of Europe with a view to enhancing the democratic management of cultural diversity and establishing open, transparent and regular dialogue between the Council of Europe, the main religious organisations and communities and representatives of non-religious convictions in Europe.

The first and second Exchanges, held in 2008 and 2009 focused on teaching about religion and non-religious convictions as part of intercultural education. The 2010 Exchange was held in Ohrid in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” from 12 to 14 September, and its theme was “The role of the media in fostering intercultural dialogue, tolerance and mutual understanding: freedom of expression of the media and respect for cultural and religious diversity” – a subject which was in keeping with, and took account of the results of, the “Speak Out Against Discrimination” Campaign.

The 2010 Exchange had two main aims. The first was to raise awareness about the standard-setting and legal framework of the Council of Europe, in which dialogue between the religious communities, representatives of non-religious convictions and the media can be established today. Particular reference was made in this connection to the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights.

The second aim was to highlight the ways in which media practices, particularly those in the training and production field, can enhance the media’s role in fostering dialogue and tolerance.

Add a paragraph here on the conclusions of the Exchange?

In conclusion, I would like to point that as early as 1950, the basic principles of “freedom of thought, conscience and religion” were set out in Article 9 of the European

Convention on Human Rights. In Europe, this freedom has been transformed into an elaborate concept of religious pluralism based on tolerance and broadmindedness – ideas which are, to quote the European Court of Human Rights, “acknowledged hallmarks of democratic society”.

The Court has repeatedly stated that this freedom is one of the most essential components in the process of constructing individual identity and the full development of society, which is of equal importance to believers, atheists, agnostics, sceptics or even to the indifferent.

The Council of Europe’s work in this area enables us today to use the term “European secularism”, which is a form of secularism based on dialogue and recognition. It is viewed as a separation of the profane and the sacred, the secular and the spiritual, the state and religions and other currents of thought, and the public and private sector, and is based on the following basic principles:

- the principle of freedom of conscience, thought and religion or, in other words, the right to have a religion or not, to practise it or to be able to change it (Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights);
- the principle of non-discrimination (equal rights and duties, entailing respect for others regardless of their convictions or religions);
- the principle of the clear separation between religion and politics;
- the principle of neutrality and impartiality vis-à-vis religious matters on the part of the authorities.

I will finish by saying that dialogue is what all of the Council of Europe’s work in the intercultural field is based on. And this dialogue is intended to be an open, sincere and, we hope, lasting exchange between the main religious organisations and communities, representatives of non-religious convictions and all other stakeholders, whether from an institutional or civil society background.

Thank you.