SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

BOLLETTINO

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE   BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE   PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE   SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 0187

Sabato 21.03.2009

INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA 10ma SESSIONE ORDINARIA DEL CONSIGLIO DEI DIRITTI DELL'UOMO

INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA 10ma SESSIONE ORDINARIA DEL CONSIGLIO DEI DIRITTI DELL'UOMO

Il 16 marzo scorso, in occasione della decima Sessione Ordinaria del Consiglio dei Diritti dell'Uomo, in corso a Ginevra, l'Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso l'Ufficio delle Nazioni Unite, l'Ecc.mo Mons. Silvano M. Tomasi, ha pronunciato l'intervento che riportiamo qui di seguito:

● INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. SILVANO M. TOMASI

Mr. President,

In her latest Report, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief informed the Human Rights Council that she "regularly receives reports of violation of the rights of members of religious minorities and vulnerable groups to carry out their religious activities". In many parts of the world, religious minorities, including Christian minorities, still face daily discrimination and prejudices. The Holy See expresses its concern on the increasing situations of religious intolerance and calls upon States to take all the necessary measures - educational, legal and judicial - intended to guarantee the respect of the right to freedom of religion and to protect religious minorities from discrimination.

At its first ever meeting on "intolerance and discrimination against Christians", the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) emphasized that the denial of the rights of Christian communities is not only an issue where they form a minority, but that discrimination and intolerance may also exist where Christians are a majority in society. It seems to my delegation that a number of States, that previously were committed to a balanced and healthy relationship between Church and State, are now increasingly siding with a new secularist policy that aims at reducing the role of religion in public life. In this regard, the Holy See calls upon these States to ne inclusive and to recognize the important role religions can play within society. Religions, in fact, contribute to the promotion of moral and social values, which go beyond an individualistic concept of society and development, seeking the common good as well as the protection and the respect of human dignity.

Mr. President,

Last autumn the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) organized an experts' seminar on articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) as a contribution to a clarifying debate on some possible areas of complementary standards.

Though the question concerning limitations to the Right to Freedom of Expression with a view to respecting the religious feelings of persons is a legitimate one – many States have those limitations in their laws, including Western States - the Holy See does not think that another international instrument is the right answer. My Delegation is of the opinion that the implementation of the universal principle of freedom of religion is the best protection; that each State should look into its own national legislation and should consider how it can encourage a frank but respectful discussion between members of the same religion, between representatives of different religions and persons who have no religious belief. One should, however, at all times keep in mind that the right to religious freedom is intrinsically related to the right to freedom of expression. Where followers of religions have no right to express their opinion freely, the freedom of religion is not guaranteed. Where persons are not allowed to engage in a honest discussion on the merits and/or flaws of a religion, the right to the truth is denied and the right to choose or change his/her religion or belief is seriously hampered.

Thank you Mr. President

[00458-02.01] [Original text: English]

[B0187-XX.01]