



HELSINKI COMMISSION

May 16, 2019

Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Commitments Regarding Freedom of Religion or Belief

The 57 participating States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe have repeatedly committed to recognizing and respecting freedom of religion or belief. The 35 participating States of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe—the forerunner of the OSCE—signed the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, which included: “The participating States will recognize and respect the freedom of the individual to profess and practice, alone or in community with others, religion or belief acting in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience.”

The OSCE’s Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights has staff dedicated to freedom of religion or belief, led by a senior advisor. ODIHR legal reviews to help participating States comply with their OSCE commitments have included existing law and draft legislation on freedom of religion or belief. ODIHR only conducts such reviews after receiving a formal invitation from a participating State. A panel of OSCE/ODIHR experts on freedom of religion or belief assists OSCE/ODIHR, and the ODIHR director appoints the panel’s 14 members every three years.

This compilation, developed by Helsinki Commission staff, covers CSCE/OSCE commitments on freedom of religion or belief in 20 documents from the Final Act to the OSCE Ministerial Council in 2014. It includes the document title, excerpted text, and links to the original document. The commission will update the compilation when new commitments are made.

Table of Contents

Helsinki Final Act, 1975.....	2
Madrid Concluding Document, 1983.....	3
Vienna Concluding Document, 1989.....	4
CSCE/OSCE Copenhagen Document, 1990.....	7
Charter of Paris for a New Europe, 1990.....	9
Conference on Economic Co-operation, Bonn, 1990.....	10
Document of the Cracow Symposium, 1991.....	11
Report of the CSCE Meeting of Experts on National Minorities, 1991.....	12
Budapest Document, 1994.....	13
Istanbul Document, 1999.....	14
Astana Commemorative Declaration towards Security Community, 2010.....	16
OSCE Ministerial Councils (2001-2008; 2013-2014)	
2002.....	17
2003.....	19
2004.....	21
2005.....	23
2006.....	25
2007.....	27
2008.....	29
2013.....	30
2014.....	32

Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe Final Act | Helsinki, Finland | August 1, 1975

1. a. VII.

The High Representatives of the participating States have solemnly adopted the following:

[...]

The participating States will respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.

They will promote and encourage the effective exercise of civil, political, economic, social, cultural and other rights and freedoms all of which derive from the inherent dignity of the human person and are essential for his free and full development.

Within this framework the participating States will recognize and respect the freedom of the individual to profess and practice, alone or in community with others, religion or belief acting in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience.

The participating States on whose territory national minorities exist will respect the right of persons belonging to such minorities to equality before the law, will afford them the full opportunity for the actual enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms and will, in this manner, protect their legitimate interests in this sphere.

The participating States recognize the universal significance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for which is an essential factor for the peace, justice and wellbeing necessary to ensure the development of friendly relations and co-operation among themselves as among all States.

They will constantly respect these rights and freedoms in their mutual relations and will endeavour jointly and separately, including in co-operation with the United Nations, to promote universal and effective respect for them.

They confirm the right of the individual to know and act upon his rights and duties in this field.

In the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the participating States will act in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They will also fulfil their obligations as set forth in the international declarations and agreements in this field, including inter alia the International Covenants on Human Rights, by which they may be bound.

Co-operation in Humanitarian and Other Fields

1. Human Contacts. The participating States confirm that religious faiths, institutions and organizations, practising within the constitutional framework of the participating States, and their representatives can, in the field of their activities, have contacts and meetings among themselves and exchange information.

Concluding Document of the 1980 Madrid Meeting of Representatives of the Participating States of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, held on the basis of the provisions of the Final Act relating to the follow-up of the Conference | Madrid, Spain | September 9, 1983

Questions relating to Security in Europe – Principles.

[...] The participating States reaffirm that they will recognize, respect and furthermore agree to take the action necessary to ensure the freedom of the individual to profess and practise, alone or in community with others, religion or belief acting in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience.

In this context, they will consult, whenever necessary, the religious faiths, institutions and organizations, which act within the constitutional framework of their respective countries.

They will favourably consider applications by religious communities of believers practising or prepared to practise their faith within the constitutional framework of their States, to be granted the status provided for in their respective countries for religious faiths, institutions and organizations.

[...]

Co-operation in Humanitarian and other Fields – Human Contacts.

[...]

They will further implement the relevant provisions of the Final Act, so that religious faiths, institutions, organizations and their representatives can, in the field of their activity, develop contacts and meetings among themselves and exchange information.

Concluding Document of the 1986 Vienna Meeting of Representatives of the Participating States of the Conference on Security and Co-Operation in Europe, held on the basis of the provisions of the Final Act relating to the follow-up to the Conference | Vienna, Austria | January 19, 1989

QUESTIONS RELATING TO SECURITY IN EUROPE – Principles.

(11). The [participating States] confirm that they will respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. They also confirm the universal significance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for which is an essential factor for the peace, justice and security necessary to ensure the development of friendly relations and cooperation among themselves, as among all States.

[...]

(13.7). In this context they will ensure human rights and fundamental freedoms to everyone within their territory and subject to their jurisdiction, without distinction of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status;

(13.8). In this context they will ensure that no individual exercising, expressing the intention to exercise or seeking to exercise these rights and freedoms or any member of his family will as a consequence be discriminated against in any manner;

[...]

(16). In order to ensure the freedom of the individual to profess and practise religion or belief, the participating States will, inter alia,

- take effective measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination against individuals or communities on the grounds of religion or belief in the recognition, exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in all fields of civil, political, economic, social and cultural life, and to ensure the effective equality between believers and non-believers (16.1);
- foster a climate of mutual tolerance and respect between believers of different communities as well as between believers and non-believers (16.2);
- grant upon their request to communities of believers, practising or prepared to practise their faith within the constitutional framework of their States, recognition of the status provided for them in their respective countries (16.3);
- respect the right of these religious communities to establish and maintain freely accessible places of worship or assembly, organize themselves according to their own hierarchical and institutional structure, select, appoint and replace their personnel in accordance with their respective requirements and standards as well as with any freely accepted arrangement between them and their State, solicit and receive voluntary financial and other contributions (16.4);
- engage in consultations with religious faiths, institutions and organizations in order to achieve a better understanding of the requirements of religious freedom (16.5);

- respect the right of everyone to give and receive religious education in the language of his choice, whether individually or in association with others (16.6);
- in this context respect, inter alia, the liberty of parents to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions (16.7);
- respect the right of individual believers and communities of believers to acquire, possess, and use sacred books, religious publications in the language of their choice and other articles and materials related to the practice of religion or belief (16.9);
- allow religious faiths, institutions and organizations to produce, import and disseminate religious publications and materials (16.10);
- favourably consider the interest of religious communities to participate in public dialogue, including through the mass media (16.11).

(17). The participating States recognize that the exercise of the above-mentioned rights relating to the freedom of religion or belief may be subject only to such limitations as are provided by law and consistent with their obligations under international law and with their international commitments. They will ensure in their laws and regulations and in their application the full and effective exercise of the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief,

[...]

(20). They will deal favourably with applications for travel abroad without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, age or other status. They will ensure that any refusal does not affect applications submitted by other persons.

[...]

(32). They will allow believers, religious faiths and their representatives, in groups or on an individual basis, to establish and maintain direct personal contacts and communication with each other, in their own and other countries, inter alia through travel, pilgrimages and participation in assemblies and other religious events. In this context and commensurate with such contacts and events, those concerned will be allowed to acquire, receive and carry with them religious publications and objects related to the practice of their religion or belief.

Co-operation and Exchanges in the Field of Culture

[...]

(59). They will ensure that persons belonging to national minorities or regional cultures on their territories can maintain and develop their own culture in all its aspects, including language, literature and religion; and that they can preserve their cultural, historical monuments and objects.

Co-operation and Exchanges in the Field of Education

[...]

(63). They will ensure access by all to the various types and levels of education without discrimination as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

[...]

(68). They will ensure that persons belonging to national minorities or regional cultures on their territories can give and receive instruction on their own culture, including instruction through parental transmission of language, religion and cultural identity to their children.

Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the OSCE | Copenhagen, Denmark | June 29, 1990

II. (9.4). The participating States reaffirm that [...] everyone will have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes freedom to change one's religion or belief and freedom to manifest one's religion or belief, either alone or in community with others, in public or in private, through worship, teaching, practice and observance. The exercise of these rights may be subject only to such restrictions as are prescribed by law and are consistent with international standards;

[...]

(25). The participating States confirm that any derogations from obligations relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms during a state of public emergency must remain strictly within the limits provided for by international law, in particular the relevant international instruments by which they are bound, especially with respect to rights from which there can be no derogation. They also reaffirm that:

- such measures will not discriminate solely on the grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, social origin or of belonging to a minority **(25.4)**.

[...]

IV. (30). The participating States recognize that the questions relating to national minorities can only be satisfactorily resolved in a democratic political framework based on the rule of law, with a functioning independent judiciary. This framework guarantees full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, equal rights and status for all citizens, the free expression of all their legitimate interests and aspirations, political pluralism, social tolerance and the implementation of legal rules that place effective restraints on the abuse of governmental power.

They also recognize the important role of non-governmental organizations, including political parties, trade unions, human rights organizations and religious groups, in the promotion of tolerance, cultural diversity and the resolution of questions relating to national minorities.

They further reaffirm that respect for the rights of persons belonging to national minorities as part of universally recognized human rights is an essential factor for peace, justice, stability and democracy in the participating States.

[...]

(32). To belong to a national minority is a matter of a person's individual choice and no disadvantage may arise from the exercise of such choice. Persons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to express, preserve and develop their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity and to maintain and develop their culture in all its aspects, free of any attempts at assimilation against their will. In particular, they have the right:

- to establish and maintain their own educational, cultural and religious institutions, organizations or associations, which can seek voluntary financial and other contributions as well as public assistance, in conformity with national legislation (32.2);
- to profess and practise their religion, including the acquisition, possession and use of religious materials, and to conduct religious educational activities in their mother tongue (32.3)

- to establish and maintain unimpeded contacts among themselves within their country as well as contacts across frontiers with citizens of other States with whom they share a common ethnic or national origin, cultural heritage or religious beliefs (32.4);

(33). The participating States will protect the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities on their territory and create conditions for the promotion of that identity. They will take the necessary measures to that effect after due consultations, including contacts with organizations or associations of such minorities, in accordance with the decision-making procedures of each State. [...]

(35). The participating States will respect the right of persons belonging to national minorities to effective participation in public affairs, including participation in the affairs relating to the protection and promotion of the identity of such minorities.

The participating States note the efforts undertaken to protect and create conditions for the promotion of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of certain national minorities by establishing, as one of the possible means to achieve these aims, appropriate local or autonomous administrations corresponding to the specific historical and territorial circumstances of such minorities and in accordance with the policies of the State concerned.

(36). The participating States recognize the particular importance of increasing constructive co-operation among themselves on questions relating to national minorities. Such cooperation seeks to promote mutual understanding and confidence, friendly and goodneighbourly relations, international peace, security and justice.

Every participating State will promote a climate of mutual respect, understanding, cooperation and solidarity among all persons living on its territory, without distinction as to ethnic or national origin or religion, and will encourage the solution of problems through dialogue based on the principles of the rule of law.

[...]

(40). The participating States clearly and unequivocally condemn totalitarianism, racial and ethnic hatred, anti-semitism, xenophobia and discrimination against anyone as well as persecution on religious and ideological grounds. In this context, they also recognize the particular problems of Roma (gypsies).

They declare their firm intention to intensify the efforts to combat these phenomena in all their forms and therefore will:

- take effective measures, including the adoption, in conformity with their constitutional systems and their international obligations, of such laws as may be necessary, to provide protection against any acts that constitute incitement to violence against persons or groups based on national, racial, ethnic or religious discrimination, hostility or hatred, including anti-semitism (40.1);
- commit themselves to take appropriate and proportionate measures to protect persons or groups who may be subject to threats or acts of discrimination, hostility or violence as a result of their racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity, and to protect their property (40.2);

Charter of Paris for a New Europe | Paris, France | November 21, 1990

A new Era of Democracy, Peace, and Unity.

Human Rights, Democracy and Rule of Law. [The participating states] affirm that, without discrimination, every individual has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief, freedom of expression, freedom of association and peaceful assembly, freedom of movement.

We affirm that the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities will be protected and that persons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to express, preserve and develop that identity without any discrimination and in full equality before the law.

[...]

Guidelines for the Future.

Human Dimension. Determined to foster the rich contribution of national minorities to the life of our societies, we undertake further to improve their situation. We reaffirm our deep conviction that friendly relations among our peoples, as well as peace, justice, stability and democracy, require that the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities be protected and conditions for the promotion of that identity be created. We declare that questions related to national minorities can only be satisfactorily resolved in a democratic political framework. We further acknowledge that the rights of persons belonging to national minorities must be fully respected as part of universal human rights. Being aware of the urgent need for increased cooperation on, as well as better protection of, national minorities, we decide to convene a meeting of experts on national minorities to be held in Geneva from 1 to 19 July 1991.

We express our determination to combat all forms of racial and ethnic hatred, antisemitism, xenophobia and discrimination against anyone as well as persecution on religious and ideological grounds.

Non-governmental Organizations. We recall the major role that non-governmental organizations, religious and other groups and individuals have played in the achievement of the objectives of the CSCE and will further facilitate their activities for the implementation of the CSCE commitments by the participating States. These organizations, groups and individuals must be involved in an appropriate way in the activities and new structures of the CSCE in order to fulfil their important tasks.

Conference on Economic Co-operation in Europe | April 11, 1990 | Bonn, Germany

The participating States,

Recognizing the relationship between political pluralism and market economies, and being committed to the principles concerning:

- Multiparty democracy based on free, periodic and genuine elections;
- The rule of law and equal protection under the law for all, based on respect for human rights and effective, accessible and just legal systems;
- Economic activity that accordingly upholds human dignity and is free from forced labour, discrimination against workers on grounds of race, sex, language, political opinion or religion, or denial of the rights of workers freely to establish or join independent trade unions [...]

Document of the Cracow Symposium on the Cultural Heritage of the CSCE Participating States | Cracow, Poland | June 7, 1991

Reaffirming their commitment to the full implementation of the provisions relating to the cultural dimension in the Helsinki Final Act and other CSCE documents, the participating States agree on the following

[...]

Section II. Culture and Heritage

(12). The complete and lasting documentation of sites, structures, cultural landscapes, objects and cultural systems, including historical, religious and cultural monuments, as they presently exist, is one of the most important legacies to the cultural heritage that can be provided for future generations.

[...]

Section III. Principal Areas of Preservation and Co-operation

(26). Acknowledging the important contribution of religious faiths, institutions and organizations to the cultural heritage, the participating States will co-operate closely with them regarding the preservation of the cultural heritage and pay due attention to monuments and objects of religious origin whose original communities no longer use them or no longer exist in the particular region.

Report of the CSCE Meeting of Experts on National Minorities | Geneva, Switzerland | July 19, 1991

Reaffirming their strong determination to respect and apply, to their full extent, all their commitments relating to national minorities and persons belonging to them in the Helsinki Final Act, the Madrid Concluding Document and the Vienna Concluding Document, the Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE, the Document of the Cracow Symposium on the Cultural Heritage as well as the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, the participating States present below the summary of their conclusions.

[...]

Section III:

(17). They reconfirm that persons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to express, preserve and develop their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity and to maintain and develop their culture in all its aspects, free of any attempts at assimilation against their will.

[...]

Section V:

(28). The participating States reaffirm, and will not hinder the exercise of, the right of persons belonging to national minorities to establish and maintain their own educational, cultural and religious institutions, organizations and associations.

[...]

Section VI:

(31). The participating States, concerned by the proliferation of acts of racial, ethnic and religious hatred, anti-semitism, xenophobia and discrimination, stress their determination to condemn, on a continuing basis, such acts against anyone.

CSCE Budapest Document towards a genuine partnership in a new era |
Budapest, Hungary | December 6, 1994

Budapest Summit Declaration.

(7). The CSCE will be a forum where concerns of participating States are discussed, their security interests are heard and acted upon. We will further enhance its role as an instrument for the integration of these States in resolving security problems. Through the CSCE, we will build a genuine security partnership among all participating States, whether or not they are members of other security organizations. In doing so, we will be guided by the CSCE's comprehensive concept of security and its indivisibility, as well as by our commitment not to pursue national security interests at the expense of others. The CSCE's democratic values are fundamental to our goal of a community of nations with no divisions, old or new, in which the sovereign equality and the independence of all States are fully respected, there are no spheres of influence and the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all individuals, regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, social origin or of belonging to a minority, are vigorously protected.

[...]

IV – Code of Conduct on Politico-Military aspects of Security.

(37). The participating States will not use armed forces to limit the peaceful and lawful exercise of their human and civil rights by persons as individuals or as representatives of groups nor to deprive them of their national, religious, cultural, linguistic or ethnic identity.

[...]

VIII – The Human Dimension.

[...]

(27). Reaffirming their commitment to ensure freedom of conscience and religion and to foster a climate of mutual tolerance and respect between believers of different communities as well as between believers and non-believers, the [participating States] expressed their concern about the exploitation of religion for aggressive nationalist ends.

(28). The participating States reconfirm that human rights are universal and indivisible. They recognized that the protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers have their human dimension. They underline the right of migrant workers to express freely their ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic characteristics. The exercise of such rights may be subject to such restrictions as are prescribed by law and consistent with international standards.

Istanbul Document | Istanbul, Turkey | November 19, 1999

III. Our Common Response.

[...]

The Human Dimension. (19). [The participating States] reaffirm that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law is at the core of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security. We commit ourselves to counter such threats to security as violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief and manifestations of intolerance, aggressive nationalism, racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism.

The protection and promotion of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities are essential factors for democracy, peace, justice and stability within, and between, participating States. In this respect we reaffirm our commitments, in particular under the relevant provisions of the Copenhagen 1990 Human Dimension Document and recall the Report of the Geneva 1991 Meeting of Experts on National Minorities. Full respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, besides being an end in itself, may not undermine, but strengthen territorial integrity and sovereignty. Various concepts of autonomy as well as other approaches outlined in the above-mentioned documents, which are in line with OSCE principles, constitute ways to preserve and promote the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities within an existing State. We condemn violence against any minority. We pledge to take measures to promote tolerance and to build pluralistic societies where all, regardless of their ethnic origin, enjoy full equality of opportunity. We emphasize that questions relating to national minorities can only be resolved in a democratic political framework based on the rule of law.

IV. Our Common Instruments.

[...]

Police-related Activities. (44). We will work to enhance the OSCE's role in civilian police-related activities as an integral part of the Organization's efforts in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. Such activities may comprise:

- Police monitoring, including with the aim of preventing police from carrying out such activities as discrimination based on religious and ethnic identity;
- Police training, which could, inter alia, include the following tasks:
 - Improving the operational and tactical capabilities of local police services and reforming paramilitary forces;
 - Providing new and modern policing skills, such as community policing, and anti-drug, anti-corruption and anti-terrorist capacities;
 - Creating a police service with a multi-ethnic and/or multi-religious composition that can enjoy the confidence of the entire population;
 - Promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in general.

We will encourage the provision of modern equipment appropriate to police services that receive training in such new skills.

Astana Commemorative Declaration towards a Security Community | Astana, Kazakhstan | December 3, 2010

We, the Heads of State or Government of the 56 participating States of the OSCE [...] reaffirm the relevance of, and our commitment to, the principles on which this Organization is based. While we have made much progress, we also acknowledge that more must be done to ensure full respect for, and implementation of, these core principles and commitments that we have undertaken in the politico-military dimension, the economic and environmental dimension, and the human dimension, notably in the areas of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

[...]

(7). Serious threats and challenges remain. Mistrust and divergent security perceptions must be overcome. Our commitments in the politico-military, economic and environmental, and human dimensions need to be fully implemented. Respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law must be safeguarded and strengthened. Greater efforts must be made to promote freedom of religion or belief and to combat intolerance and discrimination. Mutually beneficial co-operation aimed at addressing the impact on our region's security of economic and environmental challenges must be further developed. Our energy security dialogue, including on agreed principles of our co-operation, must be enhanced. Increased efforts should be made to resolve existing conflicts in the OSCE area in a peaceful and negotiated manner, within agreed formats, fully respecting the norms and principles of international law enshrined in the United Nations Charter, as well as the Helsinki Final Act. New crises must be prevented. We pledge to refrain from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations or with the ten Principles of the Helsinki Final Act.

Tenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council | Porto, Portugal | December 6-7, 2002

II. OSCE CHARTER ON PREVENTING AND COMBATING TERRORISM

The OSCE participating States, firmly committed to the joint fight against terrorism,

[...]

(2). Firmly reject identification of terrorism with any nationality or religion and reaffirm that action against terrorism is not aimed against any religion, nation or people;

[...]

(21). Acknowledge the positive role the media can play in promoting tolerance and understanding among religions, beliefs, cultures and peoples, as well as for raising awareness of the threat of terrorism.

DECISION No.6 TOLERANCE AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The Ministerial Council,

Recalling the principles of human rights and the inherent dignity of the human being, freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief that underpin the general provisions of the OSCE human dimension commitments,

Reaffirming the internationally recognized prohibition of discrimination, without adverse distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion or belief, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status,

Stressing the positive role of multicultural and inter-religious dialogue in creating better understanding among nations and peoples,

Recognizing the responsibility of participating States for promoting tolerance and non-discrimination,

- Condemns in strongest terms all manifestations of aggressive nationalism, racism, chauvinism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and violent extremism, as well as hate speech and occurrences of discrimination based on religion or belief (1a).;
- Undertakes to further promote multicultural, interethnic and inter-religious dialogue in which governments and civil society will be encouraged to participate actively (1b).;
- [...] Condemns, in particular, discrimination on religious grounds and undertakes to endeavour to prevent and protect against attacks directed at any religious group, whether on persons or on places of worship or religious objects (5).;
- [...] Also condemns the recent increase in acts of discrimination and violence against Muslims in the OSCE area and rejects firmly the identification of terrorism and extremism with a particular religion or culture (7).;

- Decides to take strong public positions against hate speech and other manifestations of aggressive nationalism, racism, chauvinism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and violent extremism, as well as occurrences of discrimination based on religion or belief (8).;
- Calls on relevant authorities of participating States to investigate promptly and impartially acts of violence, especially where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that they were motivated by aggressive nationalism, racism, chauvinism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and violent extremism, as well as attacks motivated by hatred against a particular religion or belief, and to prosecute those responsible in accordance with domestic law and consistent with relevant international standards of human rights (9.).

[...]

8. The Platform for Co-operative Security.

[...]

8.4. Co-operation with the Council of Europe (CoE). The fight against terrorism appeared at the forefront of the common endeavours of both organizations, with a view to underpinning their respective strategies and activities in countering terrorism and its financing sources, ensuring simultaneously respect for standards of democracy, human rights, rule of law, inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue.

**Eleventh Meeting of the Ministerial Council | Maastricht, The Netherlands |
December 1-2, 2003**

**OSCE STRATEGY TO ADDRESS THREATS TO SECURITY AND STABILITY IN THE
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

Threats to security and stability in the twenty-first century

[...]

(12). Practices related to discrimination and intolerance both threaten the security of individuals and may give rise to wider-scale conflict and violence. They can have their root in issues such as ethnic and religious tensions, aggressive nationalism, chauvinism and xenophobia, and may also stem from racism, anti-Semitism and violent extremism, as well as lack of respect for the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

The OSCE response

[...]

(37). The participating States, the OSCE bodies and institutions, the Secretariat and many OSCE field operations are engaged in activities directed against threats related to discrimination and intolerance, including those deriving from religious and ethnic tensions combined with violent extremism. They also perform a significant early warning function. The annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting and other events within the human dimension provide opportunities to discuss threats related to discrimination and intolerance and to make recommendations on possible actions to address these threats. While fully respecting freedom of expression, the OSCE will strive to combat hate crime which can be fueled by racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic propaganda on the Internet.

(38). The participating States and OSCE bodies and institutions are committed to stepping up their efforts to counter threats arising from discrimination and intolerance. Harmonious relations between ethnic, religious, linguistic and other groups and the rights of persons belonging to national minorities will be actively promoted, as will equal opportunities for women and men. Violence, intolerance, extremism and discrimination against these groups, including migrant workers, asylum seekers and other immigrants, must be counteracted and persons responsible for such actions held accountable. At the same time, the respect of persons belonging to such groups for the rule of law, democratic values and individual freedoms is essential.

**DECISION No. 3/03 – ACTION PLAN ON IMPROVING THE SITUATION OF ROMA AND
SINTI WITHIN THE OSCE AREA**

The Ministerial Council [is] committed to respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without adverse distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion or belief, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

[...]

DECISION No. 4/04 – TOLERANCE AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The Ministerial Council reaffirm[s] its commitment to promote tolerance and combat discrimination, and its concern about all manifestations of aggressive nationalism, racism, chauvinism, xenophobia, anti-

Semitism and violent extremism in all participating States, as well as discrimination based, inter alia, on race, color, sex, language, religion or belief, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status;

[...]

(9). Affirms the importance of freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, and condemns all discrimination and violence, including against any religious group or individual believer. Commits to ensure and facilitate the freedom of the individual to profess and practice a religion or belief, alone or in community with others, where necessary through transparent and non-discriminatory laws, regulations, practices and policies. Encourages the participating States to seek the assistance of the ODIHR and its Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief. Emphasizes the importance of a continued and strengthened interfaith and intercultural dialogue to promote greater tolerance, respect and mutual understanding.

Twelfth Meeting of the Ministerial Council | Sofia, Bulgaria | December 6-7, 2004

DECISION No. 12/04 – TOLERANCE AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The Ministerial Council,

[...]

(3). Further decides to intensify efforts for the implementation of these three decisions, which include commitments in the fields of, inter alia, education, media, legislation, law enforcement, migration and religious freedom.

PERMANENT COUNCIL DECISION no. 607 – COMBATING ANTI-SEMITISM

The Permanent Council,

Taking into account the forthcoming OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism in Berlin on 28 and 29 April 2004,

[...]

Reaffirming the participating States' existing commitments related to combating anti-Semitism, and...in order to reinforce our common efforts to combat anti-Semitism across the OSCE region, decides,

(1). The participating States commit to:

- Strive to ensure that their legal systems foster a safe environment free from anti-Semitic harassment, violence or discrimination in all fields of life;
- Promote, as appropriate, educational programmes for combating anti-Semitism;
- Promote remembrance of and, as appropriate, education about the tragedy of the Holocaust, and the importance of respect for all ethnic and religious groups;

[...]

PERMANENT COUNCIL DECISION No. 621 TOLERANCE AND THE FIGHT AGAINST RACISM, XENOPHOBIA AND DISCRIMINATION

The Permanent Council decides,

(1). The participating States commit to:

- Consider enacting or strengthening, where appropriate, legislation that prohibits discrimination based on, or incitement to hate crimes motivated by, race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status;

- Promote and enhance, as appropriate, educational programmes for fostering tolerance and combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination;
- Promote and facilitate open and transparent interfaith and intercultural dialogue and partnerships towards tolerance, respect and mutual understanding and ensure and facilitate the freedom of the individual to profess and practice a religion or belief, alone or in community with others, including through transparent and non-discriminatory laws, regulations, practices and policies.

DECISION No. 13/04 – THE SPECIAL NEEDS FOR CHILD VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING FOR PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE

The Ministerial Council...

(2). Encourages participating States to strengthen relevant governmental structures for children. Also encourages participating States to intensify actions, as appropriate, in line with the relevant recommendations for participating States in the OSCE Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings to counter factors which contribute to making children particularly vulnerable to trafficking in human beings including: discrimination, based, inter alia, on race, sex, religion or belief, national or social origin, birth or other status; exploitation, as defined in the OSCE Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings; poverty; lack of education and displacement;

**Thirteenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council | Ljubljana, Slovenia |
December 5-6, 2005**

DECISION No. 2/05 – MIGRATION

The Ministerial Council [...] acknowledge[s] also that successful integration policies that include respect for cultural and religious diversity and promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms are a factor in promoting stability and cohesion within our societies.

DECISION No. 10/05 – TOLERANCE AND NON-DISCRIMINATION: PROMOTING MUTUAL RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING

The Ministerial Council,

[...]

Reaffirm[s] its determination to implement the existing OSCE commitments in the fields of tolerance and non-discrimination and freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, and recalling other relevant international obligations,

[...]

Rejects the identification of terrorism and violent extremism with any religion or belief, culture, ethnic group, nationality or race;

Decides that the OSCE should continue to raise awareness and develop measures to counter prejudice, intolerance and discrimination, while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to inter alia race, colour, sex, language, religion or belief, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status;

[...]

Decides that the participating States while implementing their commitments to promote tolerance and non-discrimination will focus their activities in such fields as, inter alia, legislation, law enforcement, education, media, data collection, migration and integration, religious freedom, inter-cultural and inter-faith dialogue, and commit to:

- **(5.1).** Consider increasing their efforts to ensure that national legislation, policies and practices provide to all persons equal and effective protection of the law and prohibit acts of intolerance and discrimination, in accordance with relevant OSCE commitments and their relevant international obligations;
- **(5.2).** Strengthen efforts to provide public officials, and in particular law enforcement officers, with appropriate training on responding to and preventing hate crimes, and in this regard, to consider setting up programmes that provide such training, and to consider drawing on ODIHR expertise in this field and to share best practices;
- **(5.3).** Encourage public and private educational programmes that promote tolerance and non-discrimination, and raise public awareness of the existence and the unacceptability of intolerance

and discrimination, and in this regard, to consider drawing on ODIHR expertise and assistance in order to develop methods and curricula for tolerance education in general, including:

- Fighting racial prejudice and hatred, xenophobia and discrimination;
- Education on and remembrance of the Holocaust, as well as other genocides, recognized as such in accordance with the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and crimes against humanity;
- Education on anti-Semitism in order to ensure a systematic approach to education, including curricula related to contemporary forms of anti-Semitism in participating States;
- Fighting prejudice, intolerance and discrimination against Christians, Muslims and members of other religions;

[...]

- **(5.6).** Continue, with the support of relevant OSCE structures, institutions and field operations if necessary, to address the issue of migration and integration with respect for cultural and religious diversity as part of the overall efforts by the OSCE to promote tolerance, mutual respect and understanding and to combat discrimination, as well as to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;

(6). Tasks the ODIHR to:

- **(6.3).** Through its Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief, to continue providing support to the participating States, upon their request, in their efforts to promote freedom of religion or belief, and to share the Panel's conclusions and opinions with OSCE participating States, both bilaterally and at relevant OSCE conferences and events;

(7). Decides to make an appropriate contribution to the "Alliance of Civilizations" initiative through the promotion of inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue and the advancement of mutual understanding and respect as well as human rights throughout the OSCE area and in this regard tasks:

- **(7.1).** The OSCE Chairman-in-Office to inform the Secretary-General of the United Nations of this decision and of the interest of the OSCE to support the "Alliance of Civilizations" initiative;
- **(7.2).** The Secretary General, drawing on the expertise of the OSCE structures and institutions, in particular the ODIHR, to provide in co-operation with participating States an OSCE contribution to the "Alliance of Civilizations" initiative and to bring it to the attention of the Alliance of Civilizations High-Level Group by the end of June 2006.

Fourteenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council | Brussels, Belgium | December 4-5, 2006

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT ON MIGRATION

We, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the OSCE participating States, welcome the report prepared on the OSCE work in the area of migration since 2005 and express our appreciation and continued support for the work carried out on migration and integration issues in all three dimensions of the OSCE and affecting all countries, including those of origin, destination and transit.

[...]

As the phenomenon of migration has been growing, both in scope and in complexity, we encourage all relevant OSCE institutions and structures, within their existing mandates, to continue their work on migration and integration issues in all three dimensions, in particular on the potential contribution of migration to sustainable development and co-development; promoting integration with respect for cultural and religious diversity; addressing forced migration while respecting relevant international legal obligations, and combating illegal migration as well as trafficking in human beings and the exploitation, discrimination, abuse and manifestation of racism directed towards migrants, with special attention to women and children; and facilitating dialogue, partnership and co-operation between the OSCE participating States and the Partners for Co-operation on migration-related issues.

DECISION No. 13/06 – COMBATING INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION AND PROMOTING MUTUAL RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING

The Ministerial Council,

[...]

Reaffirming its determination to implement the existing OSCE commitments in the fields of tolerance and non-discrimination and noting the contribution of the 2006 tolerance-related implementation-focused thematic meetings on Inter-Cultural, Inter-Religious and Inter-Ethnic Understanding (Almaty), on Education to Promote Mutual Respect and Understanding and to Teach about the Holocaust (Dubrovnik) and on Hate Crimes Data Collection (Vienna);

[...]

(4). Commits to raise awareness of the value of cultural and religious diversity as a source of mutual enrichment of societies and to recognize the importance of integration with respect for cultural and religious diversity as a key element to promote mutual respect and understanding;

(5). Calls upon the participating States to address the root causes of intolerance and discrimination by encouraging the development of comprehensive domestic education policies and strategies as well as through increased awareness-raising measures that:

- Promote a greater understanding of and respect for different cultures, ethnicities, religions or beliefs;
- Aim to prevent intolerance and discrimination, including against Christians, Jews, Muslims and members of other religions;

- Promote remembrance and education about the tragedy of the Holocaust, as well as other genocides, recognized as such in accordance with the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and crimes against humanity;

[...]

(14). Encourages the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), based on existing commitments, including through co-operation with relevant OSCE executive structures:

- To further strengthen the work of the work of the ODIHR’s Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief in providing support and expert assistance to participating States;

[...]

DECISION No. 15/06 COMBATING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

The Ministerial Council, [...]

(11). Recommends that the participating States establish training programmes concerning sexual exploitation of children for personnel, including those working in the areas of justice, policing, tourism, transport, social work, health care, civil society, religious organizations, and education.

[...]

REPORT TO THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL ON OSCE MIGRATION ACTIVITIES IN 2006

[...]

Summary Report on the activities of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM):

[...]

The study indicates similarities between the HCNM’s approach and the approaches followed by the countries which are the subject of the study. At the heart of the HCNM’s approach of “integration respecting diversity” lies the idea that States need to encourage participation in the political, social, economic and cultural life of mainstream society with a view to developing a sense of belonging, while at the same time protecting the rights of all persons to maintain their own identity, including their culture, language and religion.

Fifteenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council | Madrid, Spain | November 29-30, 2007

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT ON SUPPORTING THE UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL
CONTER-TERRORISM STRATEGY**

[...]

(4). [The participating states] recall the comprehensive global approach of the Strategy towards countering terrorism by addressing not only its manifestations, but also the conditions conducive to its spread, including but not limited to, prolonged unresolved conflicts, dehumanization of victims of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, lack of rule of law and violations of human rights, ethnic, national and religious discrimination, political exclusion, socio-economic marginalization and lack of good governance, while recognizing that none of these conditions can excuse or justify acts of terrorism.

[...]

DECISION No. 5/07 PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS IN COUNTERING TERRORISM

The Ministerial Council, [...]

Recognizing the role of media and educational institutions in encouraging pluralistic debate with a view to promoting ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural diversity and countering violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism, and in this regard welcoming the work of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of Media and the ODIHR in these fields,

[...]

Acknowledging the usefulness of joint counter-terrorist efforts by government bodies and the private sector (civil society and the business community) in the form of voluntary co-operation, based upon the principles of partnership and mutual trust, in order to provide better security and clear benefits to all parties. In this regard, efforts should particularly take due account of:

- Promoting economic stability and security and addressing the underlying factors, such as social, political, and conditions which terrorists exploit,
- Promoting tolerance, human rights, the rule of law, democracy, good governance and inter-cultural dialogue,
- Promoting public awareness and outreach through the media and educational institutions, while respecting cultural and religious diversity,
- Identifying, prioritizing, and protecting critical infrastructure and addressing preparedness/ consequence management issues,
- Countering the financing of terrorism inter alia by supporting the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and other relevant institutions.

[...]

DECISION No. 10/07 TOLERANCE AND NON-DISCRIMINATION: PROMOTING MUTUAL RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING

The Ministerial Council,

[...]

Reaffirming its commitment to raise awareness of the value of cultural and religious diversity as a source of mutual enrichment of societies and to recognize the importance of integration with respect for cultural and religious diversity as a key element to promote mutual respect and understanding;

[...]

Acknowledging the important role youth can play in fostering mutual respect and understanding between cultures and religions contributing to the promotion of democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and in this regard taking note of the Youth Forum held in Madrid on 5 and 6 November 2007;

[...]

Recognizing the importance of freedom of religion or belief and education on tolerance and non-discrimination as a means to promote mutual respect and understanding and in this regard taking note of the presentation of the “Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools;”

[...]

(1). Calls for continued efforts by political representatives, including parliamentarians, strongly to reject and condemn manifestations of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, discrimination and intolerance, including against Christians, Jews, Muslims and members of other religions, as well as violent manifestations of extremism associated with aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism, while continuing to respect freedom of expression;

[...]

(8). Encourages participating States to share best practices in their legislation, policies and programmes that help to foster inclusive societies based on respect for cultural and religious diversity, human rights and democratic principles;

Sixteenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council | Helsinki, Finland | December 4-5, 2008

MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ON THE OCCASION OF THE 60th ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

We, the members of the Ministerial Council of the OSCE,

[...]

reiterate that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief; freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and association. The exercise of these rights may be subject to only such limitations as are provided by law and consistent with our obligations under international law and with our international commitments.

Twentieth Meeting of the Ministerial Council | Kyiv, Ukraine | December 5-6, 2013

[...]

DECISION No. 3/13 – FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, CONSCIENCE, RELIGION OR BELIEF

The Ministerial Council,

Reaffirming past CSCE/OSCE decisions on the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, in particular as recognized by the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, the 1983 Madrid Document, the 1989 Vienna Document, the 1990 Copenhagen Document, the 1994 Budapest Document and the 2003 Maastricht Document,

Recalling the international human rights provisions contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international obligations of States Parties to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and other international human rights instruments relevant to the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief,

Committed to ensuring respect for and enjoyment of the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief for all,

Emphasizing that every individual has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, which includes the freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of one's choice, as well as not to have or profess any religion, to change one's religion or belief, and the freedom to manifest one's religion or belief, either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private, through teaching, practice, worship and observance. The freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such restrictions as are prescribed by law and are consistent with international standards,

Reaffirming the commitments of participating States to respect, protect, and ensure the right of everyone to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief,

Emphasizing the link between security and full respect for the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief,

Deeply concerned by continuing acts of intolerance and violence against individuals and religious or belief communities on the basis of thought, conscience, religion or belief around the world,

Emphasizing that freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief and all other human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent, interrelated and mutually reinforcing,

Stressing the importance of fostering a climate of mutual tolerance and respect between believers of different communities as well as between believers and non-believers,

Calls on participating States to:

- Fully implement OSCE commitments on the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief;
- Fully implement their commitments to ensure the right of all individuals to profess and practice religion or belief, either alone or in community with others, and in public or private, and to manifest

their religion or belief through teaching, practice, worship and observance, including through transparent and non-discriminatory laws, regulations, practices and policies;

- Refrain from imposing restrictions inconsistent with OSCE commitments and international obligations on the practice of religion or belief by individuals and religious communities;
- Promote and facilitate open and transparent interfaith and interreligious dialogue and partnerships;
- Aim to prevent intolerance, violence and discrimination on the basis of religion or belief, including against Christians, Jews, Muslims and members of other religions, as well as against non-believers, condemn violence and discrimination on religious grounds and endeavour to prevent and protect against attacks directed at persons or groups based on thought, conscience, religion or belief;
- Encourage the inclusion of religious and belief communities, in a timely fashion, in public discussions of pertinent legislative initiatives;
- Promote dialogue between religious or belief communities and governmental bodies, including, where necessary, on issues related to the use of places of worship and religious property;
- Take effective measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination against individuals or religious or belief communities on the basis of religion or belief, including against non-believers, by public officials in the conduct of their public duties;
- Adopt policies to promote respect and protection for places of worship and religious sites, religious monuments, cemeteries and shrines against vandalism and destruction.

**Twenty-First Meeting of the Ministerial Council | Basel, Switzerland |
December 4-5, 2014**

DECLARATION ON ENHANCING EFFORTS TO COMBAT ANTI-SEMITISM

(11.6). We, the members of the Ministerial Council of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe,

[...]

[Call upon the participating States to:]

- Encourage the inclusion of religious and belief communities in public discussions of pertinent legislative initiatives;

DECLARATION ON CO-OPERATION WITH THE MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS

(4). We also call for strengthened dialogue and co-operation with Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation with regard to ensuring the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, preventing intolerance, xenophobia, violence and discrimination on the basis of religion or belief, including against Christians, Muslims, Jews and members of other religions, as well as against non-believers, promoting interfaith and intercultural dialogue, combating intolerance and discrimination against individuals or religious or belief communities, and promoting respect and protection for places of worship and religious sites, religious monuments, cemeteries and shrines, against vandalism and destruction.