

**STATEMENT BY MONSIGNOR JANUSZ S. URBAŃCZYK,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HOLY SEE,
AT THE 1350th SPECIAL MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

13 JANUARY 2022

**RE: ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRMAN-IN-OFFICE OF THE OSCE,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF POLAND, H.E. ZBIGNIEW RAU**

Mr Chairman,

The Holy See warmly welcomes the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, H.E. Zbigniew Rau, to the Permanent Council and, while congratulating him for assuming the 2022 OSCE Chairmanship, thanks him for today's presentation. To you, Ambassador Hałaciński, and to the entire staff of the Polish Delegation and Chairmanship team, the Holy See extends its congratulations and best wishes. As on previous occasions, the Delegation of the Holy See in Vienna pledges its support and constructive engagement to the current Chairmanship-in-Office.

The Holy See believes that the OSCE can and should continue to play a decisive role in providing security and stability in its area and beyond, true to its nature and scope as a regional security organisation. Its extensive *acquis* of consensually-adopted commitments and its toolbox of conflict prevention and resolution can and should enable the concerted efforts of the 57 participating States, to analyse, debate and address the challenges of the New Year.

In this regard, we have to admit that challenges to stability and security are not foreign to the OSCE region. In his message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace on January 1st Pope Francis stated: "Despite numerous efforts aimed at constructive dialogue between nations, the deafening noise of war and conflict is intensifying. While diseases of pandemic proportions are spreading, the effects of climate change and environmental degradation are worsening, the tragedy of hunger and thirst is increasing, and an economic model based on individualism rather than on solidary sharing continues to prevail".¹

Moreover, another observation made by Pope Francis does not seem unrelated to our Organisation. During his annual Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, he expressed concern regarding the diminished effectiveness of many international organizations in dealing with contemporary challenges "due to their members entertaining differing visions of the ends they wish to pursue. Not infrequently, the centre of interest has shifted to matters that by their divisive nature do not strictly belong to the aims of the organization. As a result, agendas are

¹ Pope Francis, *Message for the Celebration of the 55th World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2022.

increasingly dictated by a mindset that rejects the natural foundations of humanity and the cultural roots that constitute the identity of many peoples.”²

Therefore, my Delegation welcomes the determination of the Polish Chairmanship to “ensure that all voices are heard and all advice taken into account”³. In fact, we can address challenges effectively only through consensus (the golden rule in the decision-making process of our Organization), which requires a willingness to listen carefully and to take in due consideration the arguments of all participating States. –Respect and mutual understanding are the foundation of cooperation, which demands first and foremost a realistic appraisal of the current conditions of divergence or conflict, in order to entrust its solution to patient and constructive dialogue.

The nature of the Organization and its decision-making rules have allowed the 57 participating States to reach consensus on a great number of issues that otherwise would simply have been impossible to resolve. My Delegation remains convinced that our Organization is still capable of proving its value in finding necessary solutions and ways forward, given the many challenges of our days.

Furthermore, my Delegation encourages the Polish Chairmanship, when addressing the third dimension, to keep its focus and emphasis on freedom of religion. The Holy See considers its distinctive duty to insist on this freedom, not because of a purely individual interest or lack of interest in other freedoms, but because – as Saint John Paul II said – “this right is the litmus test for the respect of all the other human rights”.⁴

In this context, it is our hope that close attention will be devoted to the ever-growing intolerance and discrimination against Christians, Jews, Muslims and members of other religions. In fact, such despicable phenomena do not only constitute a violation of religious freedom, but can trigger violence and conflicts on wider scale, thereby threatening the security and stability of the OSCE area and ultimately endangering peaceful relations among the participating States. The human-centred perspective, announced by the Polish Chairmanship, will help to pay the full attention to all victims of violence, recognising at the same time the specificity of intolerance and discrimination against Christians, Jews, Muslims and members of other religions and addresses the specific needs of targeted religious communities.

In conclusion, my Delegation wishes to reiterate its best wishes to you, Minister Rau, and to the entire Polish Chairmanship team. Allow me to conclude with the words of Pope Francis: “In every age, peace is both a gift from on high and the fruit of a shared commitment. Indeed, we can speak of an ‘architecture’ of peace, to which different institutions of society contribute, and an ‘art’ of peace that directly involves each one of us”⁵. We are strongly convinced that OSCE represents an important piece of such architecture of peace.

Thank you, Mr Chairman!

² Pope Francis, *Address to the members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See*, 10 January 2022.

³ SEC.PR/3/22.

⁴ St. John Paul II, *Address to the participants in the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE*, 10 October 2003.

⁵ Pope Francis, *Message for the Celebration of the 55th World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2022.