

## OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2006

31 October 2006

Three EHF representatives (Vera Pegna, Suzy Mommaerts and David Pollock) took an active part in the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting from October 2-13 in Warsaw.

We made two interventions in plenary sessions, drawing attention to the failure to give non-believers equal rights even in states that otherwise had good records on human rights and equality.

### Intervention by David Pollock

### Intervention by Vera Pegna (in French)

We ran a successful side-meeting on Equality for Non-Believers and Believers, announced as follows:

In the Vienna Convention (1989) OSCE member states undertook to

(16.1) – 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;

(16.2) – foster a climate of mutual tolerance and respect between believers of different communities as well as between believers and non-believers;

No definite figures exist as to the number of believers or of non-believers but most reliable sources indicate that between 35 and 50 % (or more) of the European population are either indifferent to religion or declared humanists, atheists, agnostics or freethinkers. Nevertheless, this large part of the population and their non-religious beliefs are rarely recognised and are commonly ignored by national and international institutions in discussions about discrimination and dialogues to promote mutual understanding. This constitutes a flaw in the effective implementation of the rule of law. The EHF delegation wishes to discuss with government and NGO representatives as well as with ODIHR officers how to implement the Vienna commitment in order to defuse a potential source of tension in our societies.

We also submitted a formal recommendation to OSCE:

## HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY AND RELIGION

The struggle for human rights is a vital contribution to the development of democracy, but human rights are threatened by governments that give a privileged position to religious bodies and base legislation on religious morality and rules.

We therefore call on OSCE ODIHR to report on the extent to which these practices are found in member states.