

Ms. Asma JAHANGIR
Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief
(Report A/HRC/6/5)
13.09.07

EU intervention

(Pontus) Ambassador Francisco Xavier
Estheres

Thank you Mr. President,

We thank Ms. Jahangir for a very comprehensive and important report, from which we are able to learn and assess the practice of the 21 year mandate on freedom of religion or belief. The EU has always supported the work of the Special Rapporteur and considers it to be a very important instrument in ensuring one of the fundamental human rights upheld in the core Human Rights instruments.

Combating all forms of discrimination based on religion and belief is a particularly important task in the current days. The EU will continue to devote its attention to this issue and will follow up on the recommendations you make on your report on how to prevent such violations through proactive strategies.

We would like to put to you the following questions on your report:

- 1- You identify in your report a number of groups that are particularly vulnerable with regard to their freedom of religion or belief and you call on States to ensure that their constitutional and legislative systems provide adequate and effective guarantee of freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief to all without distinction. Considering the particular vulnerability of these groups, and besides promoting the equality before the law, what kind of measures do you think States should promote in order to ensure that their rights are fully protected?
- 2- You call for attention to be paid in cases where there have been repercussions against persons cooperating with your mandate and other representatives of United Nations human rights bodies. What in your opinion can be done by this body to protect these persons and to prevent further such incidents?
- 3- In your report, you mention that an official or State religion must never be exploited at the expense of the rights of minorities. The EU is particularly concerned about the rights of minorities who face discrimination and persecution in a number of countries. In your report you add that each State has a positive obligation to ensure that the persons on their territory and under their jurisdiction, including members of religious minorities, can practice the religion or belief of their choice free of coercion and fear. We would welcome your views on how best States might honour these obligations.