



*ISCOMET Network for Democracy, Human Rights, Protection of Minorities, Co-operation and Development in South - Eastern Europe*

**MARIBOR INITIATIVE PROJECT**

***Contribution of Religious Communities to Reconciliation, Respect of Diversity, Democracy, Human Rights, Protection of Minorities, Co-operation and Stability in South Eastern Europe***

***DOCUMENTS ADOPTED IN THE PERIOD  
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*issued by ISCOMET Board on 9 April 1992 with the aim to draw attention of the international community to the danger of spreading and intensifying of the war in BaH*

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*adopted at the Round table: “Democracy and Religion – The Romanian Experience”, Timișoara, 31<sup>st</sup> May - 1<sup>st</sup> June 2002*

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**RESOLUTION ON THE PROTECTION OF THE HISTORICAL ARCHITECTURAL AND LANDSCAPE HERITAGE OF SMALL NATIONS AND ETHNIC MINORITIES**

*adopted at the European Scientific Conference: "Nation And State - Small Nations and Ethnic Minorities in the Emerging Europe", Maribor, Slovenia, 3 - 5 February, 1992*

The European Scientific Conference: "Nation and State – Small Nations and Ethnic Minorities in the Emerging Europe"

CONSIDERS that the historical architectural and landscape heritage of small nations and ethnic minorities constitutes an essential feature of their cultural identity.

NOTES with concern the serious damage that the recent war has caused to the historical, architectural and landscape heritage of Croatia.

STATES its belief that in no circumstances is deliberate damage to the historical heritage of the country justified or could be accepted.

REQUESTS all of the parties concerned that they respect the international instruments for the protection of historical heritage during wartime and avoid causing any further damage to the Croatian architectural and landscape historical heritage.

APPEALS to the international community and in particular to international organisations active in the field of protection of historical heritage, to study way and means of reconstructing the architectural and other landscape destroyed by the war in this part of Europe as an important part of European cultural heritage.

**APPEAL TO STOP THE WAR AND DESTRUCTION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

*issued by ISCOMET Board on 9 April 1992 with the aim to draw attention of the international community to the danger of spreading and intensifying of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina*

Members of ISCOMET from Bosnia and Herzegovina of Muslim, Serbian and Croatian ethnic origin have informed us of the killings, devastation and other atrocities caused by the war that has in recent days begun in this part of Europe. We were especially struck by news that the first victims of terror were children and other innocent people that demonstrated for peace on the streets of Sarajevo.

At the very beginning of this war we are witnessing the destruction of the cultural heritage of all nationalities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We were shocked by the news of bombing of the historical nucleus of Sarajevo, of the cultural monuments of all nationalities, of the international pilgrimage site of Medjugorje, and of cemeteries and other sacred sites of the Catholic, Islamic, Eastern Orthodox and Jewish confession. We are appalled that in the announced attack on the city of Mostar one of the most valuable monuments of Europe - the bridge over the river Neretva - would be destroyed.

Having the knowledge of the bitter experiences from the war in Croatia we are aware that any delay with the action to stop the war will cause further deterioration of the situation and further killings, the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, and the destruction of buildings, industrial plants, communication facilities et cetera.

We plead to the CSCE, the Council of Ministers of the EEC, the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, international non-governmental organisations, the mass media, and all the people of good will to undertake every action in their capacity for stopping the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In particular, decisive pressure needs to be exerted upon neighbouring states to

discontinue aggression upon the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, one of the internationally recognized states of Europe.

The city of Sarajevo should not become for a second time in the recent history the place where the European cataclysm has been ignited.

**Prof. dr. Winfried Böttcher**, vice-chairman

**Prof. dr. Silvo Devetak**, chairman

**Prof. dr. L.V. Ferraris**, vice-chairman

**Prof. dr. Peter Roberts**, vice-chairman

**Dr. Gerhard Seewann**, vice-chairman

## **APPEAL TO STOP AND PUNISH THE CRIMES AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

*issued by ISCOMET Board on 21 May 1992 with the aim to urge some actions that could prevent the spreading of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina*

ISCOMET has already in its Appeal of 9 April 1992 warned the European organisations of the horrible consequences, which will occur if the war in this state were not prevented.

Our worst fears have been unfortunately materialised. The criminal acting against the innocent people is unrestrained and unpunished continuing. People are being killed, tortured, inhumanly treated, pushed into starvation – many of the are dying – their property is being robbed and ruined. Hundreds of thousands of them have been forcibly displaced. All this is done with the concealed goal to change the ethnic and religious composition of the population on the particular territories, aimed at the fulfilment of the intention of the neighbouring states to split the internationally recognised Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the basis of “new ethnic borders”.

Such criminal actions represent a breach of the basic norms of the UN Charter and in particular of the Geneva Conventions and Protocols on the Protection of the Civil Persons during the war and of the victims of Military Conflicts, of the London Agreement on the Crimes against Humanity, as well as of the Provision of the Penal Code of (former) Yugoslavia (still in force in this Republic) on the punishment of the crime of genocide and war crimes against the civil population.

The attacks on the UNPROFOR units, on the EEC monitors, on the representatives of the International Red Cross and similar actions, confirmed the presumption that those who commit these actions are trying to drive out of Bosnia and Herzegovina all those, who could be able to stop their crime actions or to be witnesses of them later.

The Presidency of ISCOMET urges that all the following actions should be undertaken without delay and if necessary with the use of all means that are on disposal of EEC:

- delivery to the population of the most needed humanitarian aid, especially of food and medications;
- cessation of further criminal actions against the civilian population;
- within the framework of the CSCE, the establishment of a European Court for the prosecution and punishment of persons who have committed these crimes.

**Prof. dr. Winfried Böttcher**, vice-chairman

**Prof. dr. Silvo Devetak**, chairman

**Prof. dr. L.V. Ferraris**, vice-chairman

**Prof. dr. Peter Roberts**, vice-chairman

**Dr. Gerhard Seewann**, vice-chairman

**MESSAGE TO THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF UNESCO ON THE UNESCO'S PROJECT DIALOGUE OF CULTURES**

*addressed by the participants of the International Conference on »Protection of Ethnic Minorities in Contemporary European Circumstances with special Emphasis on Central – Eastern Europe«, held on Pohorje, Slovenia, on 26 – 27 November 1994*

Words of support addressed by the Director General of UNESCO, Mr. Federico Mayor, to the participants of the Conference were warmly accepted as a confirmation of the importance of their work.

In these few days the participants who came mostly from different Eastern European countries (Poland, Slovak Republic, Hungary, Russia, Lithuania, Belorussia, Croatia, Macedonia and Slovenia) have discussed several problems concerning minorities' questions, which are one of the key issues in their young democracies. The discussions were lively and concerned, and at the end the common conviction prevailed that a new, non-formal spirit of mutual understanding is needed on the world-wide scale. This could be fostered by the people, who are in a position to rise above political and ideological passions and today's contradictions. We hope that our common deliberations and discussions can contribute to a new culture of democracy, which can bring the necessary tolerance and understanding in the rapid and radical changing life in Europe. New European order should represent civic societies, which main civic standards are the rule of law, peaceful and non-violent conflict resolution and strict respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In this perspective the participants (and ECERS in particular) recognise the importance of UNESCO and give their full support to its activities, especially welcoming new initiatives aimed at conflict preventions and strengthening peace. We fully support the idea of Director General of UNESCO that a culture of war should be replaced by a culture of peace. The UNESCO Culture for Peace Programme will be an important instrument for the promotion and transfer of knowledge on peace-building through the collection and processing of information and the exchange of experiences.

The participants of the Maribor Conference also endorsed the idea of elaborating a UNESCO's project "Dialogue of Cultures" with regard to the prevention of extreme nationalism, ignorance and intolerance.

Within the framework of the "Culture of Peace Programme" and the "Dialogue of Cultures" Project, an international forum of eminent personalities and public figures devoted to the discussion of the strategy of solidarity of the world community against intolerance through a dialogue of cultures could be organised under the auspices of UNESCO in 1995 – the United Nations Year of Tolerance.

The participants of the Conference would like to express their deepest concern and interest to cooperate with UNESCO in the realisation of these Programmes.

**APPEAL FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION ON THE TERRITORY OF FORMER YUGOSLAVIA**

*adopted at the International Round Table: "The Notions of Ethnicity in the Teachings of the Major Confessions in the Central-Eastern European Area and Their Impacts on Inter-ethnic Relations", Pohorje, Slovenia, 1-2 December, 1994*

On 1 - 2 December, 1994 at Poštarski dom Pohorje, Slovenia, an international round table of theologians, sociologists, historians and other scientists as well as representatives of some humanitarian organisations was held under the working title "The Notions of Ethnicity in the Teachings of the Major Confessions in the Central-Eastern European Area and Their Impacts on Inter-ethnic Relations". It was convened on the initiative of the International Scientific Conference Minorities for Europe of Tomorrow – ISCOMET and the European Centre for Ethnic, Regional and Sociological Studies of the University of Maribor - ECERS.

Members of Islam and the Catholic Church, the Evangelical Church and the Orthodox Church from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Slovenia and other European states were present.

After the presentation of papers and after comprehensive discussions, participants have reached an agreement upon the following:

1. We demand an immediate secession of all armed conflicts in the area of Bosnia and Herzegovina and stress the fact that war and other acts of violence are immoral and in contradiction with the basic tenets of religions we belong to.

2. We express our deepest shock and protest concerning the violations of basic human rights and freedoms and concerning the destruction of material goods and cultural heritage of individuals and peoples in the area concerned. We regret every victim of this war.

3. We appeal to all the parties involved to negotiate in order to reach stable and just peace in which the international community should play more effective role. Dialogue is the only alternative to war.

4. We underscore that renewal of life on this soil must be based on respect of human rights and freedoms, as well as upon the rights of ethnic and religious minorities. Every religion and every nationality express its identity best in dialogue with other religions and nationalities. We support the idea that as a symbolic beginning of common trust each party rebuild one religious facility to the other.

5. We appeal to all religious communities, especially to their leaders, that they, by their moral authority and encouragement of a common dialogue, do all what lies in their power to stop hostilities as soon as possible and to start the renewal of life in this area. At the same time we appeal to all political factors in the area of the former Yugoslavia, as well as in the world as whole to assist in the accomplishment of goals stated here in.

**Dr. Mile Babić**, Franciscan Theology Sarajevo

**Evgen Balažić**, Evangelical Church in Slovenia

**Dr. Smail Balič**, Editor, "Islam und der Western", Zwendorf, Austria

**Dr. Thomas Bremer**, Katholisch-Ökumenisches Institut, Münster

**Dr. Silvo Devetak**, European Centre for Ethnic, Regional and Sociological Studies, University of Maribor

**Mateja Dovečar**, European Centre for Ethnic, Regional and Sociological Studies, University of Maribor

**Dr. Mirko Đorđević**, Pedagogical Faculty, Belgrade

**Dr. Sergej Flere**, Faculty of Law, University of Maribor

**Dževad Hodžić**, Main Imam, Islamic Centre, Zagreb

**Jasmina Klojčnik**, European Centre for Ethnic, Regional and Sociological Studies, University of Maribor

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**Dr. Franc Perko**, Catholic Archbishop of Belgrade, Theological Faculty, University of Ljubljana

**Atanasije Rakita**, Theological Faculty, Belgrade

**Dr. Vinko Škafar**, Theological Faculty, University of Ljubljana, Maribor department

**Dr. John B. Taylor**, Conference of European Churches, Geneva

**Zoltan Toth**, Open University, Subotica

**Ph.D Mark Wheeler**, Help Age International, Zagreb

#### **APPEAL FOR RECONCILIATION AND COOPERATION**

*adopted at the International Conference "The Contribution of Religious Communities to Peace and the Removal of the Consequences of the War on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia", Rogaška Slatina, Slovenia, 19-21 September 1997*

1. The International Conference/Round Table "The Contribution of Religious Communities to Peace and the Removal of the Consequences of the War on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia" was held 19-21. September, 1997, organised by the International Scientific Conference Minorities for Europe of Tomorrow (ISCOMET), Maribor, in cooperation with the Foundation for International Understanding (Copenhagen) and the European Centre for Ethnic, Regional and Sociological Studies of the University of Maribor, under the auspices of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe Mr. Daniel Tarschys. 123 religious dignitaries and theologians belonging to the Jewish and Islamic faith, as well as to the three Christian churches (Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant), representatives of international organisations and scholars from all the former member states of Yugoslavia attended. This Conference was a follow-up to the Conference held in December 1994 at Pohorje (Slovenia), where an Appeal for Peace was adopted.

2. The participants expressed their satisfaction with the meeting. In spite of different views on certain problems, which were expressed in reports and fruitful discussions, it was demonstrated that a consensus exists on substantial questions, such as the need for repentance, forgiveness, mutual reconciliation and cooperation.

3. The participants ask heads of churches and religious communities, by the force of their moral authority, to promote permanent ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue and to stimulate cooperation at all levels. They also appeal to all people to refrain from unilateral assessments, mutual insults, defamation and the spirit of suspicion.

4. The participants appeal to all political persons and institutions, who are involved in resolving the crisis in the area of the former Yugoslavia, to make even greater efforts in speeding up the process of democratisation, honouring and protecting human rights and freedom and the rights and freedom of ethnic and religious groups, as these are the preconditions for preserving lasting peace and the establishment of trust and stability. The possibility of a normal integration of the successor states into the international community depends on peace and stability in the area of the former Yugoslavia.

5. The participants do not think that collective guilt of a people exists, but responsibility for man and people does exist. Therefore, they support judicial proceedings and punishment of perpetrators of crimes. Equality of all in front of the law and the rule of law is requested.

6. The participants ask churches and religious communities for to make additional efforts in promoting humanitarian missions, as the survival of hundreds of thousands of refugees and deportees depends on these.

7. The participants call upon the international community to continue with carrying out their accepted duties with regard to the return of refugees to their homes, while competent authorities are called upon to remove all administrative and other barriers which make return impossible. At the same time, they call upon churches and religious communities to create an atmosphere enabling the possibility and safety of return.

8. The participants call upon the heads of religious communities to enable the freedom to carry out religious services in those environments, where this is not yet possible.



9. The participants recommend that majority religious communities, with the goal of advancing confidence, make efforts to either protect existing or renew the sacral facilities of minority religious communities.

10. The participants appeal to all educational and cultural institutions to renew mutual dialogue and cooperation as soon as possible, and particularly to do away with material in curricula and textbooks which stimulate hatred and intolerance, as well as extending necessary and objective knowledge on other cultures and religious traditions in the form of multicultural education of the young.

11. The participants urge competent authorities to do away with or simplify the regime of visas and other administrative regulations and to remove transportation barriers, in order to ease communication between individuals and peoples.

12. Convinced of the relevance and stimulating nature of the meeting, the participants agree that similar meetings be held on a regular basis in order to continue the development of the goals of the conference in the transition to the third millennium.

The participants thank the organisers for the impeccable organisation of the Conference, while thanking the hosts for their sincere reception.

### **STATEMENT ON THE PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE KOSOVO CRISIS**

*issued by ISCOMET on 5 May 1999; signed by more than 50 reputable individuals from almost all European countries*

ISCOMET – The International Scientific Conference of Minorities for the Europe of Tomorrow, faithful to its moral and legal principles concerning peace, democracy, human rights, reconciliation between peoples and the protection of minorities, being convinced that the use of violence can not be a means for resolving ethnic conflicts, continuing its activities undertaken since 1990 for the realisation of these principles in the territory of the successor states of the former Yugoslavia and with regard to the relations between them, has adopted the following Statement on the Peaceful Resolution of the Kosovo Crisis:

**General considerations.** The NATO bombing of Yugoslavia has apparently had the opposite effect of that which was intended that is to prevent the further expulsion of the Albanian population from Kosovo and to make possible a political settlement of the conflict, in line with the requirements of the international community. The continuation of bombing has resulted in a severe deterioration of the situation not only for the population of Kosovo, but also for other parts of Yugoslavia, irrespective of their ethnic, religious or political affiliations. In addition to the humanitarian catastrophe that has been caused by the expulsion or exodus of the Albanians and, proportionally, of members of other ethnic groups from Kosovo, a human catastrophe is emerging that affects the entire Yugoslav population, which is composed not only of Serbs (64 per cent of the total) but also of Albanians, Hungarians, Montenegrins, Romanians, Croats, Slovaks, Ruthenians and other ethnic groups who have their kith and kin in neighbouring countries.

It is essential to be aware of the number of civilian casualties, which is increasing day by day (at least 500 killed and even more injured by now), of other “collateral damage” which has now achieved disastrous proportions and of the real danger of a major ecological catastrophe, which could affect the whole geographical area, etc. As things now stand, the final outcome could be the total destruction of the economic, social and cultural foundation of a European nation and of the international infrastructure in this part of Europe, on the one hand, and the additional exodus of Albanians from a devastated Kosovo, who will probably remain for an uncertain time in neighbouring countries which are either unable or are unwilling to host them, on the other hand.

The existing regime in Serbia has been reinforced by NATO attacks against Yugoslavia due to the natural response of people to “rally round the flag” at a time of external aggression. Contrary to the NATO's intention, democratic forces in Serbia have been weakened and, in addition, the democratic government of Montenegro finds now itself between the NATO “hammer” and the Serbian regime's

“anvil”; it is also confronted with a large pro-Serbian oriented population with the potential for violent conflict between the two groups.

**Proposals.** In order to stop the further deterioration of the situation it is necessary, with political wisdom and human dignity, to undertake the following measures:

**1.**The immediate and simultaneous cessation of any action by Serbian military, paramilitary and police units which leads to the harassment and expulsion of the Albanian population remaining in Kosovo, a cease-fire between Serbian forces and the KLA , the withdrawal of Yugoslav forces from Kosovo, cessation of NATO bombing of targets in Yugoslavia, and the suspension of economic and symbolic sanctions directed against Yugoslavia and its constituent republics.

**2.** The immediate sending of humanitarian aid to Kosovo and other parts of Yugoslavia affected by the present conflict and to the approximately half a million refugees from previous conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina who have not received international aid in the past, and whose resentment and unequal treatment could jeopardise long-term prospects for peace in the region.

**3.**The development of an international peace-keeping force in Kosovo organised and co-ordinated by the UN.

**4.**The return of the OSCE verifiers to Kosovo and their introduction into other parts of Yugoslavia affected by the war in order to investigate the amount of damage and to identify the urgent needs of the population with the aim of avoiding a further major human catastrophe.

**5.** The persecution and punishment of persons, whoever they are, who committed, collaborated with the perpetrators of, or instigated the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity, the crime of ethnic cleansing and war crimes.

**6.**The organisation of the safe return of the Albanian and other peoples of Kosovo to their homes.

**7.** The immediate start of Serbian/Albanian negotiations under the aegis of the Secretary General of the UN with the participation of all parties involved in the conflict, European neutral states and states who have a connection with the region, leading to the adoption, by the Parliament of Serbia, of clearly worded legislation for the broadly autonomous status of Kosovo within Yugoslavia and a detailed programme of legislative, educational and other measures to be taken to improve inter-ethnic relations within Kosovo and for a better understanding of the culture, history and traditions of Albanians and other minorities living in Yugoslavia.

**8.** The convening of a donor's conference aimed at discussing and proposing plans for the adoption of economic, social and logistical measures for war affected areas and war affected populations including refugees and displaced persons from the present and previous conflicts, and the restoration of navigation on international waterway, the river Danube.

**9.** The convening of an international conference within the framework of the OSCE dealing with security, stability, human rights and the protection of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities in south-eastern Europe leading to the repatriation of all refugees and displaced persons and the development of programmes of assistance for the strengthening of democratic institutions and the culture of democracy. The representatives of the relevant NGOs, religious communities and organisations as well as other entities of civil society should be invited to take part and give their contributions to the deliberations of the conference.

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**Prof.Dr. Thomas Bremer** (Germany)

**Bojan Brezigar**, President of EBLUL – The European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (Belgium)

**Costa Carras**, Vice-president, Europa Nostra (Greece)

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**Prof.Dr. Silvo Devetak**, President of ISCOMET – International Scientific Conference on Minorities for the Europe of Tomorrow (Slovenia)

**Miljenka Fischer Devetak**, M.A. (Croatia)

**Dr. Vladimir Dubovik** (Ukraine)

**Dr. Ludwig Elle**, Vice-President of FUEN - Federal Union of European Nationalities and Vice-President of

DOMOWINA (Germany)  
**Prof. Karsten Fledelius** (Denmark)  
**Angus Fowler M.A.** (Germany / United Kingdom)  
**Hans Heinrich Hansen**, Vice-President of FUEN - Federal Union of European Nationalities (Denmark)  
**Hermann Heil** (Denmark)  
**Prof.Dr. Henry R. Huttenbach** (United States of America)  
**Dr. Živojin Jazić** (FR Yugoslavia)  
**Prof.Dr.Emil Kirchner**, President of the Scientific Council of ISCOMET (United Kingdom)  
**Jasmina Klojčnik**, Secretary General of ISCOMET (Slovenia)  
**Prof.Dr. Igor Koval** (Ukraine)  
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**Boštjan Lovšin**, M.A.Ph. (Slovenia)  
**Maire Mattinen**, arch. (Finland)  
**Igor Mekina** (Slovenia)  
**Dr.Dahlia Moore** (Israel)  
**Jasna Murgel M.A.** (Slovenia)  
**Elisabeth Naclér**, (The Åland Islands Finland)  
**Hon. Francis Noel Baker** (Greece / United Kingdom)  
**Letas Palmaitis** (Lithuania)  
**Dr. Franc Perko**, Belgrade Archbishop and Metropolitan (FR Yugoslavia)  
**Prof.Dr. Remigio Ratti**, (Ticino, Switzerland)  
**Dónall Ó Riagáin** (Ireland)  
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**Jane Wade**, MFA, Dip.Cons (United Kingdom)  
**Bojana Weiss-Hatić** (Slovenia / Croatia)

## **DECLARATION ON THE NEW DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM OF PROTECTION AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE RIGHTS OF MINORITIES IN THE FR YUGOSLAVIA**

*adopted at the Round Table "Inter-Ethnic Relations and the Status of Minorities in the FR Yugoslavia", Niška Banja, FR Yugoslavia, 2 – 5 November 2000*

**1.** The Round Table "Inter-Ethnic Relations and the Status of Minorities in the FR Yugoslavia", held in Niška Banja on November 2-5, 2000, was attended by more than fifty experts and members of sixteen minority communities\* living in the FR Yugoslavia (FRY). This Round Table was convened by the international non-governmental organization ISCOMET with the seat in Slovenia (which has a consultative status at the Council of Europe), in cooperation with the Yugoslav Association for Political Science, Belgrade and Society of Good Action, Niš. The Round Table is part of the ISCOMET project *Democracy, Human Rights and Protection of Persons Belonging to Ethnic and Religious Minorities in South-Eastern Europe*, supported by the European Union within the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe.

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\* Albanians, Bosniacs, Bulgarians, Czechs, Croats, Jews, Germans, Hungarians, Macedonians, Muslims, Roma, Rumanians, Ruthenians, Slovaks, Slovenes, Valachians.

2. The democratic transformation of the Yugoslav society and state, which has started with the recent political changes, is a complex process. Its efficient realization depends on the resoluteness of the democratic political parties and all state structures, the development of the local and regional self-governance, as well as on the participation of citizens in the civil society institutions and relevant organizations. The most urgent task of the new democratic authorities is the solution of accumulated basic life-problems of the population, the necessity to swiftly revive the economy, including its parallel transition according to the European trends. Furthermore, it is necessary to reconstruct the present institutions in accordance with the democratic principles of the rule of law, as well as to define the international position of Yugoslavia and, gradually, to include it in the European integration.

The long-term conditions for realizing these tasks may only be created by affirming the democratic character of the new authorities through factual changes in various domains of organization and activity of the state and society. The FRY is multi-ethnic and multi-religious community. For this reason the improvement of inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations, including the position and protection of ethnic and religious minorities, represent the starting point and test for the democratic development of the country, as well as the cornerstone of its internal and international stability.

The task of the international community is to significantly contribute to the definition of the new democratic system of the FRY and to the building up of the new status and rights of minorities in this context, by consistently carrying out the concept of multi-ethnic and multi-religious character of Kosovo, in compliance with the UN Security Council Resolution 1244. Accordingly, the responsibility of FRY and the Republic Serbia is the consistent implementation of the multi-ethnic and multi-religious character of Vojvodina.

3. The creation of the democratic system of minority protection should be based upon the following principles:

- The democratic political atmosphere in the society, conducive to the new democratic system of the minorities' rights, should be created by a consistent eradication of all forms of nationalism, in principle, and, in particular, by removing the consequences of the former negative practice and injustice done against particular minorities, including ethnic stereotypes and prejudices. In addition, it is necessary to educate the citizens (especially the youth) on tolerance, the culture of dialogue and the values of a multicultural society. The educational system and media have particular responsibilities in this regard.
- In seeking solutions, it is commendable to start from the European international standards adopted during the previous decade, as well as from one's own experience and the experiences of particular European countries.
- The new democratic system of minorities' rights in a democratic, civil society of the FRY should be developed by providing human rights of the members of minorities within the constitutional, legal and political system of this country, as well as by institutional protection of the individual and collective rights important for the minorities' identity.
- The new democratic system of the minorities' rights in the FRY should be built by improving the specific constitutional norms and legal provisions, as well as by including the new policy contents in the field of culture, education, information and other areas in all levels of the society.
- The creation of the new democratic system of minority protection should be based on the specific conditions and needs of minorities in Yugoslavia. But it is necessary to introduce new models that have proven to be successful in contemporary European multicultural communities, as are for instance: decentralization of power and enlargement of the competencies and responsibilities of local and regional authorities in settling minorities' issues; institutional participation of minorities in making decisions at all levels; the mandatory representation of minorities in the local, regional, republic and federal legislative organs and other governmental bodies; the assurance of a non-discriminatory social-economic position of minorities; the development of various forms and models of autonomy, as well as of the local and regional self-governance in ethnically mixed areas.
- The representatives of ethnic and religious minorities should be included in the discussions and decision-making concerning the new democratic system of protection and rights of minorities.

- The use of different terms for particular minority communities (nationality, national minority, ethnic group, etc.) should not result in the discrimination of any minority.
- Within the public financing, at all levels, the material and other presuppositions for functioning of the minorities' institutions and organizations should be provided, as an integral part of the institutional system.

4. The Round Table discussion addressed many problems and proposed solutions that should be respected by the new democratic authority in the FRY, as follows:

- The democratic significance of the new FRY would also be confirmed by its access to the instruments of the Council of Europe, such as the Framework Convention on the Rights of National Minorities (1995), European Charter on the Regional and Minority Languages (1992), European Social Charter (1996) and Framework Convention on the Cross-Border Regional Cooperation (1982), as well as to international procedures for monitoring the implementation of standards of human rights and protection of minorities.
- The new democratic constitutional and legal system of the FRY and its constitutive parts should include specific provisions on minority protection emanating from the above mentioned principles. Mechanisms of monitoring the implementation of this system and providing the minorities' rights within the country's judicial system should also be determined, including the institution of an ombudsman for minorities.
- The new constitutional and legal system should affirm its democratic character by securing the position and rights of the minority communities that, thus far, have not been recognized (e.g. Bosniacs, Croats, Czechs, Germans, Jews, Macedonians, Roma, Slovenes, Ukrainians, Valachians).
- Within the new democratic system of the minorities' protection, the Roma community in the FRY should be provided a non-discriminatory position and rights, while appropriate measures in particular areas should advance their social-economic position.
- The institutional and legal recognition of identity, position and rights of Bosniacs (Muslims) in Sandžak would strengthen the cooperation and stability in the region in line with the contemporary European integration models.
- The normalization of relations and development of cooperation between the successor-states of the former Yugoslavia would significantly improve the position of the new minorities in the FRY and of the Serbian and Montenegrin minorities in these countries as well.
- The bilateral agreements of the FRY with neighbouring countries, in accordance with the good practice in Europe during the last decade, would contribute to the position and rights both of the Serbian and Montenegrin minorities in neighbouring countries and the neighbouring countries' minorities in the FRY; this would strengthen the international position of Yugoslavia and contribute to the regional stability.
- The development of the regional cross-border cooperation between the FRY and its neighbours would contribute to the stabilization of the good neighbourly relations and, thus, to the improvement of the position and rights of minorities in these countries. The Round Table discussion tackled the possible development of such cooperation between Serbia, Croatia, Hungary and Romania, as well as in the region of Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania and Macedonia.
- The non-governmental organizations dealing with the problems of human rights and minority protection should participate in all aspects of building the new democratic system of the minority protection.

5. The participants of the Round Table *Inter-Ethnic Relations and the Status of Minorities in the FR Yugoslavia* and ISCOMET are ready to contribute, with their expertise, to building the new democratic system of minority protection in the FRY.

**Prof. Silvo Devetak, Ph.D.**, President of ISCOMET and Project Coordinator

**Prof. Vukašin Pavlović, Ph.D.**, President of the Yugoslav Association for Political Science

**Prof. Jovan Živković, Ph.D.**, President of the Society of Good Action

## **BLED DECLARATION ON DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND PROTECTION OF PERSONS BELONGING TO ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE**

*adopted at the 3rd International Conference "Democracy, Human Rights and Protection of Persons Belonging to Ethnic and Religious Minorities in south-eastern Europe", Bled, Slovenia, 23 – 25 February 2001*

The ISCOMET 3rd International Conference "Democracy, Human Rights and Protection of Persons Belonging to Ethnic and Religious Minorities in South-Eastern Europe" was held in Bled, Slovenia, on February 23-25, 2001. The conference was attended by more than 150 experts, activists of human rights and peace movements, members of minority groups, dignitaries from all major religious communities, civil servants and governmental officials from the countries of South-Eastern Europe (SEE) as well as by representatives of interested international governmental and non-governmental organisations.

After the comprehensive discussion of the topics on the agenda of the conference and a broad exchange of views, and recalling the ISCOMET Declaration on the new democratic system of protection and improvement of the rights of minorities in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia adopted in Niška Banja on 5 November 2000, we agreed to address the relevant authorities and institutions and all people of good will with our views regarding the following issues that are of paramount importance for peace, stability and development of the SEE area and for its gradual inclusion in the European structure:

**1. PEACE AND STABILITY.** After the period of terror and wars a positive process has begun in the successor states of Former Yugoslavia. We do hope that it signifies the end of the solving of conflicts by violence and an irreversible move towards peace, progress and the inclusion in Europe again of the countries concerned. However, in recent times we are witnessing the revival of violence in Southern Serbia, which represents a real danger of a new war with unpredictable consequences. We call on all the parties involved, as well as the international community, and especially the OSCE and the EU, to undertake all the necessary measures to stop this new armed conflict that could shake the stability and security in Europe. We urge the elaboration of long-term oriented EU policies towards SEE and request that efficient and co-ordinated strategies for their implementation be developed as soon as possible.

**2. DEMOCRACY.** The development of democracy is a prerequisite for the political and social stability and sustained economic growth of the SEE countries as well as their gradual integration into European international structures. In general, there are some guidelines that should be followed by those states in the future:

- The democratic process should not be confined only to elections but should be developed further by introducing new forms of democratic participation of people in public affairs and in decision-making on all levels without discrimination. Particular emphasis should be put on the promotion of autonomous institutions and structures of civil society and on the development of local self-government.
- Further development of a legal framework for the protection of human rights and its implementation, including the monitoring by national and international judicial bodies of human rights violations, with special emphasis on the rights of minorities, is an absolute necessity for the stability of multicultural societies.
- Strengthening the rule of law is a precondition for true democracy and reconciliation and requires the prosecution and punishment of persons who have committed serious violations of humanitarian law and persons who have committed incitement to racial and ethnic hatred.

**3. RESPECT OF MINORITIES AND THEIR PROTECTION.** We reiterate that the creation of a democratic system of minority protection should be based upon the following principles:

- The democratic political atmosphere in society conducive to the new democratic system of the minorities' rights, should be created by a consistent eradication of all forms of nationalism in principle, and in particular by removing the consequences of the former negative practices and injustice against particular minorities, including ethnic stereotypes and prejudices.

- It is necessary to educate citizens (especially the youth) to esteem and respect other cultures, in the spirit of dialogue, and on the values of a multicultural society. The respect of the principle of political, religious, cultural, and ethnic plurality should be affirmed through the media, civil and religious education and other adequate means.
- Hate speeches and incitement to political violence, which are most often directed against members of minorities, should be publicly condemned and prosecuted in accordance with law.
- In seeking solutions, it is commendable to start from the European international standards adopted during the previous decade, as well as from one's own experience and experiences of particular European countries.
- The new democratic system of minorities' rights in a democratic, civil society should be developed by providing human rights for the members of minorities within the constitutional, legal and political system of the country concerned, as well as by institutional protection of the individual and collective rights which are important for the minorities' identity.
- The new democratic system of the minorities' rights should be created by improving the specific constitutional norms and legal provisions, as well as by including the new policy contents in the field of culture, education, information and other areas at all levels of society.
- The creation of the new democratic system of minority protection should be based on the specific conditions and needs of minorities in a given country. But it is necessary to introduce new models that have been successful in contemporary European multicultural communities. These include decentralization of power and enlargement of the competences and responsibilities of local and regional authorities in settling minorities' issues; institutional participation of minorities in decision-making at all levels; the mandatory representation of minorities in the local, regional, republic and federal legislative organs and other governmental bodies; the assurance of a non-discriminatory socio-economic position of minorities; the development of various forms and models of autonomy, as well as of the local and regional self-governance in ethnically mixed areas.
- The representatives of ethnic and religious minorities should be included in the discussions and decision-making concerning the new democratic system of protection and rights of minorities.
- The improvement of the political, social, economic and cultural position of Romas should be an integral part of a democratic system of minority rights.
- The use of different terms for particular minority communities (nationality, national minority, ethnic group, etc.) should not result in the discrimination of any minority.
- Within public financing at all levels the material and other prerequisites for functioning of the minorities' institutions and organizations should be provided, as an integral part of the institutional system.
- Economic projects arising from the areas where minorities live should have special priority within the Stability Pact for SEE.
- The cultural heritage of ethnic and religious minorities in SEE should be recognized, preserved and respected as common heritage of all people living in that geographic area. Particular respect needs to be given to former sacred spaces. Authorities of SEE states should, as a sign of good will, support the endeavour to reconstruct cultural and religious heritage of the minorities living on their territory. In order that the healing process can begin there needs to be a mutual recognition of responsibility for the damage caused. And this needs to be demonstrated through practical action. ISCOMET together with international and local NGO's should seek all practical means to repair the damaged cultural heritage of SEE.
- The participants considered as very important the anthropological, sociological, cultural, political and other studies on the problems of ethnic and religious minorities, the exchange of information and other forms of co-operation between researchers from SEE in that field.

**4. RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS AND RIGHTS.** Due to their specific position in the social structure of the countries concerned, religious communities should play a decisive role in the process of reconciliation, which is a starting point for the renewal and development of communication between people in the SEE countries and for the progress of the entire region.

In order to ensure such a role of religious communities, it is necessary to:

- Respect the principles of religious freedoms and rights, especially in societies with one prevailing religious community.
- Encourage religious communities to engage in further dialogue and co-operation.
- Spread information on the international and especially European standards and experiences.
- Elaborate ways for ensuring that educational systems in the target area provide young people with objective information on all religious communities and ethnic groups and bring them up in a spirit of mutual respect and tolerance.

**5. FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES.** The participants considered these concrete follow-up activities within the ISCOMET network, which will be realised due to the financial resources available:

- The Maribor Initiative – the Contribution of Religious Communities to Reconciliation, Tolerance, Cooperation, Democracy and Human Rights in SEE, accepted by the First Working Table of the Stability Pact for SEE, which is under the auspices of the Republic of Slovenia.
- The Round Table on the problems concerning the problems of returned persons and refugees in Croatia which will be organised within the ISCOMET Network by the Croatian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, the Civic Committee for Human Rights (Zagreb), the Serb National Council and other NGOs from the relevant countries.
- The Round Table “Multiculturalism in Slovenia with special emphasis on the improvement of cultural, educational and linguistic policies concerning ethnic groups which are not recognised as ethnic communities by the constitution (Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks, Jews, Austrians etc.)”, Maribor, Slovenia.
- The establishment of the MFD Foundation for the Promotion of the Preservation of Cultural Heritage of Ethnic and Religious Minorities in SEE.
- The 19<sup>th</sup> Conference Europe of Regions (16-19 September 2001, Timisoara, Romania) which is organised jointly by ISCOMET, the Folmer Wisti Foundation for International Understanding, the Danish Cultural Institute and the European Centre for Ethnic, Regional and Sociological Studies of the University of Maribor – ECERS.

#### **FOJNICA DECLARATION ON THE PROTECTION OF KOSOVO’S CULTURAL HERITAGE**

*adopted at the conference “Sustainable Development in Local Communities – its practical role in the regeneration of the Balkans and the protection of minorities” organised jointly by ECOVAST – European Council for Village and Small Town, ISCOMET – International Scientific Conference minorities for Europe of Tomorrow, and Miljenka Fischer Devetak Foundation for Fostering the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Ethnic and Religious Minorities in SEE Fojnica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 10-13 October 2001*

#### **RECALLING**

The Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers’ Declaration on the protection and rebuilding of places of worship in Kosovo and the wider Balkans (July 2001)

The Vienna Declaration for Peace and Tolerance in Kosovo (18 March 1999)

*The UNESCO Director General’s call for the cultural heritage in the Balkans to be respected (5 May 1999)*

ECOVAST (The European Council for the Village and Small Town), ISCOMET (International Scientific Conference Minorities for Europe of Tomorrow) and the MFD Foundation (Miljenka Fischer-Devetak Foundation)

**EXPECT** all international and inter-governmental organisations and institutions concerned with the cultural heritage, especially those connected with the United Nations (UNESCO, WHC Committee, ICCROM, ICOMOS), the Council of Europe, and the European Union as well as others concerned, to



undertake urgent and concrete measures to prevent further devastation of the cultural heritage of all ethnic and religious groups in Kosovo and to protect all endangered cultural heritage there.

In particular **WE PROPOSE AND URGE**

The immediate issuing of a complete report on the present state of the cultural heritage in Kosovo with recommendations for its care and protection;

The creation of an expert advisory body under the auspices of UNESCO and the Council of Europe;

The organisation of cultural heritage monitoring teams;

The creation of a UNESCO/Council of Europe office for the cultural heritage in Kosovo to ensure that the European Union in Priština takes its responsibility for the cultural heritage in Kosovo seriously;

Support for the FRY's official request (1998) for the special protection of all listed heritage sites in Kosovo;

The creation of a public web site for the cultural heritage in Kosovo providing all possible data and open to public suggestions and proposals;

Close co-operation with existing institutions for the protection of the cultural heritage in Kosovo to avoid duplication of effort.

**Silvo Devetak**, President ISCOMET and representative of the MFD Foundation

**Angus Fowler**, President ECOVAST

#### **BELGRADE DECLARATION ON THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES AND ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY**

*adopted at the Round table: "Contribution of Religious Communities in FR Yugoslavia to Reconciliation, Respect of Diversity, Democracy, Human Rights, Protection of Minorities, Co-operation and Stability in South Eastern Europe", Belgrade, FR Yugoslavia, 14-15 December 2001*

**1.** Within the ISCOMET Network for Democracy, Human Rights and Protection of Persons Belonging to Ethnic and Religious Minorities in South Eastern Europe (SEE), the first Round Table was held on 14-15 December 2001 in Belgrade in the framework of the Project "Maribor Initiative". The objective of this Project is to encourage the contribution of religious communities to reconciliation, respect of diversity, democracy, human rights, protection of minorities, co-operation and stability in SEE. This Round Table represents a continuation of the ISCOMET meetings held on Pohorje (Slovenia) in December 1994, in Rogaška Slatina (Slovenia) in September 1997, Niška Banja (FR Yugoslavia) in November 2000, and Bled (Slovenia) in February 2001.

The Round Table was attended by more than seventy representatives of religious communities and theologians of Jewish and Islamic religious communities and Christian Churches (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant and Evangelical), non-governmental organisations, state administration and scientists from the FR Yugoslavia and other South East European States, as well as by the representatives of the European Union, Ambassador Dr. Michael Weninger, and the Conference of European Churches, Rev. Rüdiger Noll. Messages and good wishes to the participants of the Round Table were expressed by His Holiness, the Serbian Patriarch Pavle; His Eminence, Cardinal Vinko Puljić, Archbishop and Metropolitan of Sarajevo and President of the Episcopal Conference of Bosnia-Herzegovina; Reisu-l-Ulema of the Islamic Community of Bosnia-

Herzegovina, Dr. Mustafa Cerić; His Excellency, Dr. Josip Bozanić, Archbishop of Zagreb and President of the Croatian Episcopal Conference; and His Excellency, Dr. Franc Rode, Archbishop and Metropolitan of Ljubljana, President of the Slovenian Episcopal Conference. In the working sessions, the participants were further addressed by Muarem effendi Zukorlić, Mufti of the Islamic Community of Sandžak, and His Excellency, Stanislav Hočevar, Archbishop and Metropolitan of Belgrade, President of the Episcopal Conference in the FR Yugoslavia.

**2.** Participants expressed their satisfaction and appreciation to ISCOMET for enabling their joint participation in the work of the round table, which was held at the time of searching for the ways of affirmation and deepening of democracy in the FR Yugoslavia. They stressed that the spiritual renewal of the society is one of the major elements of this democratic process. Churches and religious communities can contribute individually, and through mutual ecumenical cooperation and joint activities, to this renewal. Cooperation of all people of good will, both believers and non-believers, in searching for the new means of realisation of this objective, developed on the basis of the respect of difference of opinion, should create new models of relationships not only in the FRY, but in SEE as a whole.

**3.** Efficient implementation of religious education in public schools, as well as the forthcoming Religious Freedoms Act, will be crucial elements of the democratic society renewal in the FRY. Bearing in mind that the introduction of religious education is being realised in a multi-confessional and a multi-ethnic society, the theoretical and practical experience achieved through its implementation could serve as an example for the solution of similar problems in the region. Efficiency of this programme will depend not only on institutional and legislative framework, but also on its social recognition.

**4.** Of special importance is the fact that the aforementioned and other experiences were made possible through the successful cooperation between religious communities themselves, on the one hand, and between those communities and the state, on the other. An efficient dialogue regarding the relationships of the Churches and religious communities with the state, as well as regarding religious freedoms, should also be an integral part of the process of democratic society. The further openness of the Serbian Orthodox Church, as the majority Church, for cooperation and dialogue, will also in the future be a prerequisite for the creation of democracy, human rights system, including religious freedoms and rights and protection of religious minorities in the FR Yugoslavia.

**5.** Churches and religious communities should have the right to publicly express their opinions as to the ethical and social, or even political questions, but they should not act as instruments of political parties.

**6.** One of the main preconditions of religious freedoms is the legal separation between the state and religious communities, as well as their positive relationship and cooperation. Religious communities should have equal rights and should be treated equally in all social spheres. In a multi-religious society, special attention should be devoted to freedoms and rights of ethnic and religious minorities and to the status of new religious movements, in order to assure equality and respect of the non-discrimination principle.

**7.** With regard to their cultural and historical character, religious communities have the right to realise their presence in mass media, while the state should not legally limit the possibilities for setting up their television and radio stations and other public media.

**8.** The participants of the Round Table set out different aspects of the realisation of religious freedoms and of the status of religious communities; on which the public and experts dialogue should be carried out further, and the adequate solutions should be found in the spirit of respecting the difference of opinion and mutual tolerance:

- preservation of tradition, religious and ethnic diversity in modern society which is based on the social mobility of population
- searching for adequate models of religious education that would take into account religious diversity, and education of the expert pedagogical cadre
- presence and assistance of religious communities in public institutions – hospitals, prisons and military institutions; trade, import, export and distribution of religious literature; unimpeded administration of religious institutions and selection of religious officials without interference of the state; reasonable adjustment of the working process to the course of religious holidays and sacred rituals
- strengthening the mutual understanding through dialogue and round tables, in mass media, and especially on television, between the representatives of different religions;
- regulation of the social, humanitarian and philanthropic activities of religious communities (voluntary work, collecting aid, establishing endowments, etc.);
- appropriate tax- and other regulations that would ease the financial situation and activities of religious communities;
- the return of the nationalised property or compensation of the churches and religious communities in defined time limits.

**9.** The participants expressed their support for the continuation of co-operation between the states and religious communities in SEE, especially on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, in the spirit of the “Maribor Initiative”. In particular, the co-operation in the following fields was emphasized:

- realisation of religious freedoms and rights in the context of restructuring and development of democracy and plural society;
- co-operation of religious educational institutions (seminars, exchange of teachers and students, of literature, etc.);
- religious activity (preaching, rituals, prayers, education) of religious communities directed towards mutual respect and appreciation of the positive qualities of others;
- social field – especially protection of workers deprived under the conditions of brutal introduction of the principles of market economy;
- teaching history on all levels of education, with the aim of educating for mutual respect and understanding without pretensions that the current generations should rectify injustices of the past;
- development of religious education and representation of religious communities in the fields of culture, education and media;
- status of minority religious communities and new religious movements in the new democratic societies in SEE.

**10.** The participants expressed their firm belief that, in a long-term perspective, only those churches and religious communities in SEE will be affirmed, which respect freedoms of people in a plural society and deepen the spirit of reconciliation, co-operation and stability of their followers and other citizens.

## **THE TIMIȘOARA DECLARATION ON THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES AND OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY**

*adopted at the Round table: "Democracy and Religion – The Romanian Experience. Contribution of Religious Communities to Reconciliation, Respect of Diversity, Democracy, Human Rights, Protection of Minorities, Co-operation and Stability in South Eastern Europe", Timisoara, Romania, 31 May- June 1, 2002*

The ISCOMET Network for Democracy, Human Rights and the Protection of people belonging to Ethnic and Religious Minorities in South-Eastern Europe (SEE) initiated its second Round Table in Timișoara, on the May 31<sup>st</sup> – June 1<sup>st</sup> 2002, as part of the "Maribor Initiative" project. The object of the project is to encourage the contribution of the religious communities to reconciliation, respect for diversity, democracy, human rights, protection of minorities, co-operation and stability in South-Eastern Europe. This Round Table represents a continuation of the meetings held previously by ISCOMET in Pohorje, Slovenia (December 1994), in Rogaška Slatina, Slovenia (September 1997), in Niška Banja, FR Yugoslavia (November 2000), and in Bled, Slovenia (February 2001), while the first Round Table of this kind was held in Belgrade, on the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> Decembre 2001.

The Timișoara Round Table was organised by the Euroregional Center for Democracy and the *Areopagus* Centre for Christian Studies and Contemporary Culture, both from Timișoara, Romania, ECERS – The European Centre for Ethnic, Regional and Sociological Studies of the University of Maribor and ISCOMET - the Institute for Ethnic and Regional Studies, both from Maribor, Slovenia. The Round Table was attended by over sixty leaders and representatives of churches and religious communities from Romania, theologians of various Christian Churches (Orthodox, Roman-Catholic, Greek-Catholic, Protestant and Evangelical), of Jewish and Muslim traditions, representatives of NGO's, representatives of the Government as well as local authorities. In the opening session, messages were presented by His High Holiness Nicolae Corneanu, the Romanian Orthodox Metropolitan of Banat, Prof. Dr. Silvo Devetak, President of the International Committee of the Programme and Coordinator of the Maribor Initiative, His Excellency Mihai Răzvan Ungureanu, Regional Envoy of the Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact for SEE, Mr. Constantin Ostaficiuc, Vice-President of the Timiș County Council, Prof. Dr. Gheorghe Ciuhandu, Mayor of Timișoara. Also, addresses were read from His Excellency Walter Schwimmer, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, His Excellency Dr. Erhard Busek, Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact for SEE and His Excellency Dr. Alvaro Gil-Robles y Gil Del-Delgado, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Mr. Dan Ioan Șipoș, President of the Timiș County Council.

After the thorough, specialised and constructive discussion, the participants adopted the following views concerning the topics, which were on the agenda:

1. Religion is a necessary and valuable reality of the modern societies. The current circumstances in SEE put forward the actuality of the spiritual renewal of the societies concerned. In crisis situations, as important actors of the contemporary society, the churches and the religious communities are called to intervene through solidarity and common action in the name of brotherly love. The participants agree that ecumenism is the framework for an inter-religious dialogue based on the common elements, while preserving the specific identities. The ideological and political instrumentalisation and manipulation of religion and faith, with the purpose of feeding inter-religious, inter-denominational or interethnic conflicts, is both abusive and illegitimate. In this respect, the participants of the Round Table condemn war and terrorism with religious justification and affirm that the true vocation of religion is to contribute to the preservation of peace and cooperation between people. Respect of the ethnic, religious, cultural, linguistic, and political diversity is a cornerstone for stability of the societies of the region.

2. The relationship between churches and religious communities, on the one hand, and the state, on the other hand, should be constructed so that it ensures an autonomous space of exercising religious freedom for all the officially recognised denominations. In this sense, the participants express their desire that the Law of Religion in Romania (*Legea Cultelor*) will be elaborated very soon and that the representatives of all recognised denominations and religions will be invited to take part in its preparation. As far as their relationship with the state is concerned, the churches and the religious communities understand their autonomy as a right balance between critical freedom and loyalty. The majority religious community has an important role in ensuring equal status and rights of the minority religious communities. The state should ensure a neutral, just and democratic arbitration in cases of litigations (patrimonial or of other kind) between churches or religious communities. In this respect, the way in which such conflicts were handled through inter-denominational dialogue in the Banat region was underlined as a possible positive model for dealing with situations of this kind.

3. The participants emphasised the importance of religion, of churches and of religious communities for the development of education in the history of the European civilisation. For this reason, the natural link between religion and education must be reaffirmed in the contemporary society. In this respect, it is important that the humanistic, scientific and religious education avoid the perpetuation of the false conflict between reason and faith, between religious and secular, as well as between religion and science, by honest and objective reference to the authentic European cultural tradition. Regarding the religious and theological education, the question remains open whether it would function better on a denominational or an inter-denominational basis. In addition, the education should contribute to the cultivation of the culture of respect of diversity, peaceful dialogue and cooperation between people of SEE. The knowledge of the cultural, religious and other identities of “the other” represents an efficient means for improving the relations in a multicultural, multiethnic and multi-religious society.

The freedoms of culture, science and speech must be ensured, along with the religious rights, by the state and by the churches and religious communities as well. The churches and religious communities could give an essential spiritual incentive to the implementation of human rights in the SEE societies.

4. In discussing the contribution of churches and religious communities to the implementation of the objectives of the Stability Pact for SEE the participants have stressed that the construction of a lasting stability, through long-term or medium-term projects, is not possible without the involvement of churches and religious communities in the process of preventive diplomacy. Thus, their role in developing democracy, strengthening human rights and ensuring the protection of people belonging to ethnic and religious minorities is fundamental in SEE. The joint action of these key regional players could gain credibility only through the creation, development and maintaining of a regional culture, constructed on the ethically based principles of good neighbourhood and converging interests, with the respect of each other’s identity.

In the new political circumstances the religious communities appear, as a spiritual factor, as the most stable social institutions in SEE. Having in mind the important role that churches and religious communities have in the process of democratisation and improvement of human and of inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations and hence of stability of the region, the “Maribor Initiative” should be included as a priority in the program of the Working Table I of the Stability Pact for South – Eastern Europe.

5. The participants expressed their appreciation to the project initiator, ISCOMET Network, to the local partner organizers – the Euroregional Center for Democracy and the *Areopagus* Centre for Christian Studies and Contemporary Culture, as well as to the Timiș County Council, the Timișoara Local Council and the Timișoara City Hall, for offering them the chance to participate in this Round Table.

6. The local authorities expressed unanimous delight for the fact that the second Round Table of the “Maribor Initiative” was held in Timișoara. They all agreed that due to its specific pluralistic context (ethnic, linguistic and religious), manifested through a long tradition of peaceful cohabitation and ecumenical cooperation, Timișoara could provide a model of a successful multicultural society for other regions and areas of Europe.

The Timișoara model of inter-religious and inter-ethnic solidarity, manifested through the returning of religious buildings to their original owners, through regular ecumenical prayers and through common philanthropic activities should be known in other regions of Romania and Europe also. In this respect, it was suggested that Timișoara and the Timiș County should become a regional centre for future events aiming to promote democratic values in the region.

#### THE CHISINAU DECLARATION

*Adopted at the Round table: “Promoting Inter-Religious Dialogue as a Means for Reconciliation, Conflict Resolution and Improving Democratic Stability in South – Eastern Europe: the Case of Moldova”, Chisinau, Moldova, 4-5 June 2004*

The Round Table in Chisinau is part of conferences and other activities organised within the framework of the international project „Maribor Initiative - Contribution of Religious Communities to Reconciliation, Respect of Diversity, Democracy, Human Rights, Protection of Minorities, Co-operation, Development and Stability in South Eastern Europe”. It was initiated within the frame of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. Similar Round Tables as this one in Chisinau have already been held in Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro (2001), in Timisoara, Romania (2002) and in Maribor, Slovenia (2003). The organiser of these conferences and other activities is the *ISCOMET Network for Democracy, Human Rights, Protection of Minorities, Co-operation and Development in South - Eastern Europe*. The ISCOMET Network was established with the support of the European Union (the Royaumont Process programme). It includes more than 300 individual and collective members from all European countries and wider.

The Chisinau Round Table was held under the auspices of Walter Schwimmer, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. The organiser of the Round Table was ASER - The Association for Ethnic and Regional Studies from Moldova in cooperation with ISCOMET (Maribor, Slovenia), East East Program: Partnership Beyond Borders of the Open Society Institute and Soros Foundation-Moldova, the Institute for Public Policy (Chisinau, Moldova) and ECERS - European Centre for Ethnic, Regional and Sociological Studies of the University of Maribor (Slovenia).

The Round Table was attended by 79 experts, representatives of Churches and religious communities from Moldova, representatives of NGO's from Moldova and by members of the ISCOMET Network from Germany, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Romania. The Round Table was opened by Olesea Sirbu, President of ASER - Association for Ethnic and Regional Studies in Moldova. The opening session was addressed by Mihail Sidorov, the Chairman of the Committee of Human Rights and National Minorities of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, Klaus Schumann, Director General of Political Affairs of the Council of Europe, Emre Öktem, the representative of ODIHR of OSCE, Serghei Iațco, the Head of the Department for Religious Denominations of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, Arcadie Barbarosie, Chairman of the Council of the Soros Foundation in Moldova, and Silvo Devetak, President of the International Programme Committee of the Maribor Initiative and Co-ordinator of the ISCOMET Network. Erhard Busek, Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact for SEE and Alvaro Gil-Robles y Gil Del-Delgado, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe sent their written message to the participants of the Round Table.

After thorough, specialised and constructive discussion, the participants adopted the following views concerning the topics, which were on the agenda:

1. The Churches and religious communities have the inherent potential, both individually and together, to be a significant spiritual promoter and supporter of the ongoing process of democratisation, of stability and progress of the Republic of Moldova and of its gradual inclusion into the European integration streams, as well as for the whole area of Eastern and South Eastern Europe. They could be in a better position to execute their role providing that the recommendations included into the present Declaration would be taken into account.

2. The new religious freedom and the removal of barriers to the dissemination of ideas and beliefs, including religious beliefs, have forced traditional Churches to face religious pluralism. So far, the problem remains unsolved in striking a balance between the principles of democracy and human rights, of freedom of conscience, and religion on the one hand, and the preservation of national cultural, ethnic and religious identity on the other. The state, however, should not interfere in Church and religious affairs other than providing the necessary conditions for freedom of conscience and democratic environment. Churches and religious communities should also respect the autonomy of the state.

3. The participants of the Round Table recommend in particular the following:

3.1. To promote conformity of national Moldovan legislation with the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, paying special attention to Article 9, which states that religious freedoms shall be subject only “to limitations prescribed by law and necessary in a democratic society, in the interest of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others”. We urge the government to organize a wide public hearing concerning the preparation of the new legislation. In doing this it would be commendable to have consultations with all parties involved and to find a right balance with the traditional values and experiences of the Moldovan society. Proselytism should not be the subject of any legal stipulations other than those limitations mentioned above,

3.2. To improve the functioning of appropriate parliamentary and governmental bodies dealing with religious matters; when decisions are being made, Churches and religious communities should be consulted on the principle of equal participation of all concerned; such bodies should offer to mediate between conflicting parties, in cases where the latter accept this, for the purpose of settling disputes, while taking care to ensure that government bodies do not interfere in dogma or organizational and other internal religious matters,

3.3. To improve inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations, especially by calling the Metropolitan Church of Chisinau and Moldova and the Metropolitan Church of Basarabia to come to the dialogue table on the basis of the principles of equality, respect of otherness and freedom of religious choices. The participants express their regret that the heads of both above mentioned Churches did not respond to the invitation to take part in the Panel: *Inter-religious Dialogue as a Way of Reconciliation, Development of Democracy and Protection of Small Religious Communities* of the present event,

3.4. To guarantee to all churches, religious associations, centres and communities the status of legal entities, if their activity does not violate human rights or international law. Thus the participants urge the government to register all the religious communities without discrimination if they fulfil the requirements of the law,

3.5. To guarantee through adequate legislation to religious institutions their assets which were nationalised in the past, restitution of such assets within a certain time or, in cases where this is impossible, fair compensation; due care must be taken to prevent privatisation of nationalised church property,

3.6. To condemn and eliminate any forms of expressions of hatred and discrimination based on religious grounds; to condemn the recent destruction of Jewish monuments in Transnistria,

3.7. To commend and implement the curricula of *Moral and Spiritual Education* in a way that will promote tolerance and respect for otherness; the government should undertake the necessary steps to implement this curricula in the schools, among other by providing adequate textbooks, trained teachers etc.,

3.8. To include positive information about main world religions, religious cultures and practices in school curricula,

3.9. To provide support and guarantee equal rights to all religious groups in accessing all forms of public mass media, and to give freedom of owning all forms of mass media,

3.10. To support the activities of non-governmental organisations working to strengthen mutual understanding between religious groups, and protect the religious cultural heritage,

3.11. To promote exchange programmes to give students, research workers and artists a full picture of the ethical, moral and cultural values of different religions,

3.12. To improve the preparedness of Churches and religious communities for meeting in the most fruitful way new challenges of the cultural, political and technological progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The co-ordinators of the Maribor Initiative Project and the organisers of this Round Table in Chisinau hope that the deliberations at this Round Table and other activities that are foreseen as a follow up will contribute to the process of democratisation in Moldova in order to overcome the cleavages created in the recent past and to the improvement of the process of democracy, good understanding among people and thus to the unity and progress of the Republic of Moldova. Any contribution to the melioration of the circumstances on those fields will be of paramount importance for the creation of adequate conditions for the gradual inclusion of the Republic of Moldova in the main European integration streams.

The participants of the Round Table expressed their wish to continue the discussion through follow-up activities in order to consider the particular issues that were mentioned in the deliberation of the Round Table.