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International Seminar

"Religion: The Missing Dimension of the Diplomacy and Politics in Middle East"

Madrid, 1st and 2nd April 2008

Work document n° 2

CEMOFPSC

Centro de Estudios de Oriente Medio
Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura

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Centre for Middle Eastern Studies
of the
Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture

Report produced by Jumana Trad
with the collaboration of Félix Sánchez and Blanca de Mesa

This report presents the reflections and conclusions of the experts who participated in the Seminar "Religion: dimension absent from diplomacy and politics in the Middle East", organised by the CEMOFPSC on 1st and 2nd April 2008 at the Madrid Business School (Instituto de Empresa de Madrid).

The first part of this publication (points I, II and III) have an introductory purpose: points I and II offer, respectively, a justification of the seminar topics and a synoptic view of the contents that are going to be dealt with. Point III describes the three monotheistic religions and their various denominations in the Middle East region. The second part (points IV and V) cover the content of the actual seminar, i.e. the main arguments defended by each one of the speakers, the reflections arising from the round of questions that brought each thematic block to an end and, finally, the ideas raised during the debate. The third and final part (points VI and VII) contains the recommendations extracted from the contributions of both speakers and attendees. Point VIII deals with the influence of the specific case of Jerusalem on the general theme of the seminar and the references to it made by those present.

The way in which the document is organised and written bears little resemblance to the discursive structure that is more appropriate to the academic sphere. The ideas are explained as briefly as possible in summary fashion and grouped together by topic. The document ends with the exposition of a special case: Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

With the aim of encouraging an open and independent debate, the CEMOFPSC maintains the confidentiality of the reflections of its members, speakers and guests during the work sessions, seminars, conferences and meetings that it organises.

CONTENTS:

I. Presentation

1.1. The CEMOFPSC

The fundamental aim of the Centre for Middle Eastern Studies of the Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture (CEMOFPSC, Centro de Estudios de Oriente Medio de la Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura) is to promote research into and analysis of the constituent aspects of the Middle East *(Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, Egypt and Jordan)* "problem", with the intention of contributing to a better understanding of its defining features among the Spanish population.

The CEMOFPSC was set up as an international organisation with a multidisciplinary approach to facilitate reflection, analysis and the exchange of opinions among Spanish and foreign intellectuals and experts from a wide range of spheres including sociology, history, economics, communication, ethics, law, politics, diplomacy and cooperation for development.

For this purpose, it has an Advisory Committee and an Executive Committee, composed of professionals and institutions that share a vision of society and the individual based on justice, on a profound respect for freedom of thought and on the desire to contribute to social progress, understanding among peoples, peace and the common good of mankind.

The CEMOFPSC reinforces the work that the Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture (FPSC, Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura) has been carrying out in the region for 20 years in the field of cooperation for development. It also counts on the collaboration of the Euro-Arab Network of NGOs for Development and Integration (READI, Red Euro Árabe de ONG's para el Desarrollo y la Integración), which comprises 41 NGOs.

1.2. 3rd CEMOFPSC Seminar

The 3rd seminar organised by the CEMOFPSC, entitled "Religion: The Missing Dimension of the Diplomacy and Politics in Middle East", was held at the Madrid Business School (Instituto de Empresa de Madrid) on 1st and 2nd April of 2008.

Participants: the President of the FPSC, Pilar Lara. From the religious sphere: Mons. Manuel Monteiro de Castro, Apostolic Nuncio in Spain. Mons. Fouad Twal, Coadjutor Archbishop of Jerusalem. Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Mons. Elias Chacour, Archbishop of Galilee of the Melkite Greek Catholic (Israel). Abdelaziz Aiadi, member of the Council of Ulemas and Professor at the Abdelmalik Essaadi University in Tétouan (Morocco). Jacobo Israel Garzón, President of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Spain.

From the diplomatic and political sphere: Paola Binetti, Senator of the Republic of Italy for the Democratic Party. Samuel Hadas, first Ambassador of Israel in Spain and member of the Advisory Committee of the CEMOFPSC. Pedro López Aguirrebengoa, first Ambassador of Spain in Israel and member of the Advisory Committee of the CEMOFPSC. Jorge Dezcallar, Former Ambassador to the Holy See and Morocco and Former Director of the CNI (Spanish Intelligence Centre). Musa Odeh, the Palestine National Authority's General Delegate in Madrid. Giuseppe Cassini, Italian Ambassador and former Political Adviser to the Italian Forces in UNIFIL. José María Ferré, Ambassador at Large for Relations with Foreing Islamic Communities and Organizations. Ana Menéndez, Spanish diplomat, former Ambassador on the Permanent Mission of Spain to the United Nations in New York and member of the Executive Committee of the CEMOFPSC.

From the academic, journalism and civil society sphere: Joaquín Mantecón, Professor of State Ecclesiastical Law at the University of Cantabria (Spain) and former Deputy Director General for Religious Affairs at the Ministry of Justice. Gérard Khoury, historian, author, journalist and associate researcher at the *Institut de recherches et d'études sur le Monde Arabe et Musulman* (IREMAM) in France. Nadim Shehadi, Associate Fellow, Middle East Programme, Chatham House (United Kingdom) and member of the Advisory Committee of the CEMOFPSC. Jumana Trad, Tribune and Seminars area of Casa Árabe-IEAM and member of the Executive Committee of the CEMOFPSC. Javier Martín, Arabic Service Director at the EFE news agency in Egypt, and Macarena Cotelo, President of the Euro-Arab Network of NGOs for Development and Integration (READI).

Also present among the public were the following representatives of fields and institutions such as Spanish and foreign diplomacy, journalism,

universities, research centres and civil society: Omar Azziman, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco. Abdelkader Chaoui, Cultural Advisor to the Moroccan Embassy. Yasser Morad Hossny, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt. Gustavo Suárez Pertierra, President of the Elcano Royal Institute (Real Instituto Elcano). Alona Fisher-Kamm, Political Affairs Adviser to the Israeli Embassy. Giuliana de Papa, First Secretary of the Embassy of the Italian Republic. Alberto Ucelay, Deputy Director General of Foreign Policy for the Middle East at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (Spain). Zoila Combalía, Professor of State Ecclesiastical Law at the University of Zaragoza (Spain). Paloma Durán, Professor of the Faculty of Law at the Complutense University of Madrid. Rafael Palomino, Professor of State Ecclesiastical Law at the Complutense University of Madrid. Luis P. Tarín, Spanish diplomat. Celia de Anca, Director of the Centre for Diversity in Global Management at the Madrid Business School (Instituto de Empresa de Madrid), among others.

The reflection and the debate revolved around the following questions and issues:

- What is the message of peace conveyed by religions?

- Religion as a distinguishing feature of peoples and as an instrument of mobilization, and its role in the fight against religious totalitarianism.

- Diplomacy and politics and the role of religion in reconciliation among peoples.

Finally, the seminar concluded with an open debate among speakers and attendees, and the reading of some conclusions.

1.3. Topical relevance of the seminar topics

The three monotheistic religions have exerted their influence on politics, cultural identities and different conceptions of life over the centuries, and there seems to be every indication that they will continue to do so in the future. This affirmation is particularly relevant in the case of the Middle East, where religion is an omnipresent element.

For Jews, Christians and Muslims in the Middle East, religion is not a matter of conscience isolated from other public affairs, as is the case in many other countries. In this part of the world, cradle of the three monotheistic religions, religion has had a huge and far-reaching impact on the politics and the culture of its peoples, whereas in the West religion has been relegated to the private sphere and there has been a tendency to overlook its importance as a key factor in international relations.

The influence that religion has exerted on conflicts throughout History has tarnished it with a negative reputation that has cast its positive contributions to the resolution of conflicts and crises into oblivion.

Now that so many conflicts stem from confrontations of religious origin, the positive and peacemaking path inherent in the nature of Judaism, Christianity and Islam should be incorporated into political and diplomatic negotiation processes.

Although it is not possible to obviate the multitude of interests that prevail in the region, ideology, culture and religion are of crucial importance in the development of international relations. It would be inaccurate to state that the root of the conflicts is strictly religious; they are not religious conflicts, yet there is an essential religious component in the conflict and, therefore, it should be present in the solution.

II. Summary

Religion plays a crucial rule in the resolution of conflicts, although it cannot be denied that when it has been manipulated, it has been a stumbling block in relations among human beings. This manipulation has given rise to bloody confrontations throughout History and even nowadays it is adopted as a cause by those who kill in the name of God. Nevertheless, neither can it be denied that when an effort is made to exploit the positive influence of its true message, religion becomes a catalyst for peace and harmonious coexistence among human beings.

In the West, the laic perspective has caused religion to be confined to the private sphere, which is tantamount to having excluded it from the important sphere where human fates are decided. The European concept of Church-State separation has not been borne out in reality, and has actually consisted of the State's hegemony over the Church, resulting in a gradual marginalization and weakening of the latter. This mentality makes it difficult for Europe to understand and act in the conflict that prevails in the Middle East, a region in which religion is an omnipresent factor and religious-cultural diversity is a constituent element of its identity. In an area where there are struggles between religious people, the Western solution is to convert the region to laicism, i.e. to solve the problem by casting it aside; however, eliminating that diversity in order to facilitate a conceptual approach to the problems is a mistake.

Europe resolves religious diversity by simplifying it, but that simplification, besides being unacceptable to the Middle Eastern mentality and culture, has an impoverishing effect on a region in which coexistence in diversity -religious, ethnic, linguistic- has been a constant throughout its history, one which has gradually moulded and shaped the identity of these peoples.

Another difficulty that clouds Europe's perception of the characteristic features that define the Middle East, especially with regard to the religious factor, is its insistence on renouncing its identity. It is thought that dialogue in a multicultural and diverse context is only possible from a neutral standpoint and that it requires a renunciation of one's own roots. However, identity and dialogue form an inseparable nexus through which identity gives substance to dialogue and dialogue reinforces

identity, not as a kind of arrogance or confrontation with the other side, but as an opening up to others.

It is precisely the "pacifying" nature of religion that contributes to the important role it plays in human relations and in the use of political and diplomatic means aimed at achieving peace in the Middle East. Up until now, relations among religion, politics and diplomacy have been characterised by mutual incomprehension and geared towards achieving their own particular goals, which have obscured their true nature. Therefore, the greatest difficulty consists in respecting the autonomy of these three orders, while at the same time acknowledging the productiveness of their interrelations.

All the initiatives undertaken -seminars, conferences, summits-, whose central topic has been the *Middle East* and whose aim has been to promote understanding and achieve peace, suffer from:

1. Being confined to the closed circuit of experts and not having extended to public opinion.

2. Restricting themselves to general proposals and theological disquisitions, specific practical matters such as the exercise of religious freedom being left out of the debate or off the agenda. Despite being a fundamental right, it lacks the appropriate harmonization and legislative precision in Europe, while from the Islamic point of view there are too many misgivings about this precision, and therefore its implementation should be gradual and result from a joint effort in search of dialogue, consensus and mutual respect. At the same time, achieving this harmonization and precision should be an unavoidable goal pursued in accordance with the equally unavoidable principle of reciprocity. Greater consensus on this point would constitute a solid basis for understanding between the West and the Middle East.

Genuine changes in the region will arise from the role played by civil society. Therefore, any initiative geared towards dialogue among religion, politics and diplomacy should not merely be an experiment *"in vitro"*, but should also seep into the different strata of society. The ordinary people who coexist on a daily basis, facing up to difficulties and

cherishing hopes, are the real peacemakers in the Middle East. The three religions have three elements in common: 1) the uniqueness of God, 2) love for one's neighbour and 3) the pursuit of peace:

"Seek peace, and pursue it" (Psalms, 34:15)

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (Gospel according to St. Matthew, 5:9)

"It is Allah, except Whom there is no God; the King, the Pure, the Giver of Peace" (Koran 59: 23)

III. The principal monotheistic religions in the region

LEBANON

Population:
3,700,000 inhabitants

Muslim (56.2%)
Sunnis
Shiites
Druzes
Ishmaelites
Alawites

Christian (43.8%)
Maronite
Greek Orthodox
Melchite or Greek Catholic
Gregorian Armenian
Catholic Armenian
Syrian Orthodox or Jacobite
Syrian Catholic
Nestorian
Chaldean Catholic
Copt
Evangelist
Latin

ISRAEL

Population:
6,900,000 inhabitants

Jewish (78%)

Muslim (20%)
Sunnis
Druzes
Ishmaelites

Christian (2%)
Maronite
Greek Orthodox
Melchite or Greek Catholic
Gregorian Armenian
Catholic Armenian
Syrian Orthodox or Jacobite
Syrian Catholic
Copt
Evangelist
Latin

PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

Population:
3,000,000 inhabitants

Muslim (96.2%)
Sunnis

Christian (3.8%)
Maronite
Greek Orthodox
Melchite or Greek Catholic
Gregorian Armenian
Catholic Armenian
Syrian Orthodox or Jacobite
Syrian Catholic
Nestorian
Copt
Evangelist
Latin

EGYPT

Population:
73,500,000 inhabitants

Muslim (94.3%)
Sunnis

Christian (5.7%)
Copt
Evangelist
Latin
Maronite
Greek Orthodox
Melchite or Greek Catholic
Gregorian Armenian
Catholic Armenian
Syrian Orthodox or Jacobite
Syrian Catholic
Chaldean Catholic

JORDAN

Population:
5,700,000 inhabitants

Muslim (95.8%)
Sunnis

Christian (4.2%)
Greek Orthodox
Melchite or Greek Catholic
Gregorian Armenian
Catholic Armenian
Syrian Orthodox or Jacobite
Chaldean Catholic
Copt
Evangelist
Latin

SYRIA

Population:
19,400,000 inhabitants

Muslim (93.6%)
Sunnis
Druzes
Ishmaelites
Alawites

Christian (6.4%)
Maronite
Greek Orthodox
Melchite or Greek Catholic
Gregorian Armenian
Catholic Armenian
Syrian Orthodox or Jacobite
Syrian Catholic
Nestorian
Chaldean Catholic
Evangelist
Latin

The three monotheistic religions emerged and developed in the Middle East and spread from there through the West. This region being a meeting point between West and Middle East, exchanges in the religious sphere have been reciprocal throughout History; the religion that came from the East -particularly Judaism and Christianity- has left its mark on what we might now call Western civilization, and present-day Western civilization has left its mark on religion. The influence has been such that the Western model designed on the basis of the Enlightenment, the Reformation and Westphalia has penetrated the Middle East, although religion in this region has not lost ground to the encroaching absolute power of the modern State. The difference in evolution between Western civilization and the Middle East is further highlighted by Islam's increasing presence in the West, because it is a religion that conceives of politics and society as a whole that is inseparable from the religious dimension. This is ideologically at odds with the laic mentality that characterises the West.

This region, in which religion continues to influence the fates of people and nations, is characterised by a rich diversity of denominations and trends -plural both outwards and inwards- within the three monotheistic religions. This diversity of creeds coexists in a very small area, which means that none of the three monotheistic religions can seek to monopolise the religious spectrum and assume the absolute majority, perhaps because the Middle East, unlike the West, is made up of and sustains itself on minorities.

Islam, like Judaism and Christianity, is not a religion that is characterised by its monolithism; there is no single Islam. The basic distinction between Sunni and Shiite is simply the threshold of a religion that is multifarious in its manifestations, beliefs and practices, the first link in a chain that splits into a diversity of variants. On occasions, these variants become so distinct that they break away from the chain to constitute of form of religion separate from the imaginary whole that we could call Islam -as is the case of Druzes, Alawites and Ismaelites-, in spite of fact that this whole does not actually exist as a uniform and monolithic entity.

IV. Seminar contents

1. The West. The perception of religion in the personal and political sphere

- In the West, religious feelings have diminished substantially, gradually camouflaged by the spread of secularism, laicism, relativism, and by the way in which the separation between religion and State has been conceived of.

- Ignorance about religion is a very widespread phenomenon that covers many aspects of the *res publica*.

- The analysis of religion outside the strictly religious sphere, to which it has been confined by extreme secularization in the West, is considered politically incorrect.

- Nowadays it is often asserted that religion is present only in the most "primitive" or "backward" societies, in which the power of reason and its conquests have not penetrated with their liberating thrust. According to this cliché, only the least "Westernized" countries would be in that phase of earlier human evolution, which results in the survival of religion.

- One of the illusory certainties that History has refuted is the extinction of religion as an obsolescent relic of a bygone world. On this point there was convergence between the Western and Soviet systems, one through extreme secularization and the other through declared hostility.

- For the West, the 20th century was one of the most secularist in the History of mankind, as it witnessed the acceptance of the pompous proclamation that "God is dead". However, two devastating World Wars and other heated regional conflicts in the context of the Cold War also made it one of the bloodiest in History, and so there seems to be no evidence to suggest that secularising modernization is necessarily a recipe for peace.

- The consolidation of secularization, or of laicism, "a la française", confines religion to the private sphere of individuals. This is the

triumph of the conception of the huge chasm between God and Caesar.

- For the West, the civilizing force of the goddess Reason having failed to sweep through "non-western civilization" with sufficient momentum has allowed religion to remain a significant factor beyond the narrow confines of individual spirits. Moreover, it is asserted that the disappearance of religion from the public sphere is what ensures the pacification of societies. In other words, secularization equals modernization and pacification, whereas religion equals anti-modernity and conflict.

- However, Modernity having passed and made way for "Post-modernity", the fact of the matter is that religion still exists and continues to form identities, provide values and yes, it cannot be denied, provoke conflicts.

- The religious factor could never be obliterated and, when the time came, it bounced back to play an important political role, as occurred during the Balkan process, a mixture of historical, ethnic and religious (rather than political or ideological) elements.

- Western politicians and diplomats *"have obviated on numerous occasions the importance of religion as a key factor in international relations"*. This is particularly true in the case of the Middle East, which for various reasons is the scenario that most affects Europeans.

- Written works on the subject of international relations tend to ignore the religious factor, and the same occurs on the practical plane of foreign policy.

- The significance of the religious factor in international relations is made patently clear by the increasing coverage of events and the literature relating to international issues, both of which increasingly highlight the importance of the religious factor in understanding the behaviour of different factors that operate in the international arena.

- Political leaders are not always prepared to explore the positive potential that religion can exert in the resolution of conflicts.

- The three religions -Judaism, Christianity and Islam- do not settle for a mere linguistic prowess, but instead demand responses that comply with the Truth. Politics today is not prepared to give far-reaching responses of deep significance. It focuses on everyday issues, in order to solve the complex problems of ordinary life. On the basis of this premise, politicians design provisional measures that fail to get to the heart of the matter.

2. Religion, laicism and ideologies. The Western approach to the Middle East

- "Western civilization" is not a homogeneous civilization, and neither does it have a single voice. Likewise, the impact of secularization varies; the United States is not the same as France.

- In the United States religion is an essential factor in public life. Public opinion would neither understand nor support, for instance, an agnostic or an atheist as President, hence the results of a survey commissioned by the newspaper "USA Today", in which the respondents said they would rather choose a candidate of any religious denomination than an atheist. Only 7% of US citizens claim to have no religion, describing themselves as "nothing in particular", according to the survey conducted by the prestigious Pew Research Center, which appears in a recently published report entitled "US Religious Landscape Survey".

- In Europe, generally speaking, not belonging to any religion would be perfectly understandable. Moreover, in some European countries it would almost be an advantage for being elected to occupy a political post.

- Nevertheless, Europe has a State whose Head of State is the head of the Catholic Church (The Vatican State) and another whose monarch is the spiritual head of the official Church and whose Ecclesiastical Courts are integrated in the "common law" system (United Kingdom).

- Also, a country on the border between "Western" and "non-Western" civilization, Russia, bases its national "revival" on, among other foundations, orthodox religion, as a constituent element of its identity.

- In the Europe of union and progress, it is the ongoing construction of institutions -initially commercial and subsequently political-, that has managed to avoid the conflict, and not (neither necessarily nor mainly) European secularization.

- At the same time, Europe is witnessing the emergence of new religious elements which, given their future importance, only the most impudent would dare to disregard.

- In the sphere of "Western civilization", the presence of a vigorous religious minority and (increasing) problems concerning their "integration" into the Western model have spread beyond religious boundaries to become a frequently problematic social, political and economic issue, although it remains a phenomenon with religious roots.

- The present and future limits of the 'construction of Europe' are and will be defined by the participation or non-participation, or the extent thereof, of Turkey, a matter in which the majority religion of the Turkish State wields considerable influence.

- Secularism can also be regarded as a form of religion. Secular *fundamentalists* exist. Secularism can monopolise the moral sphere; one can act in the name of secularism. This tendency, increasingly widespread in the West, is called "secular overreach."

- Church-State separation. The European concept of separation between Church and State is essentially based on the separation of a Church, generally the Catholic Church, and it also concerns the State's hegemony over the Church. Rather than a real separation, it is more of a conflict between Church and State, in which the Church has a weaker position.

- One of the models most commonly used to interpret the new international order in the 21st century is the so-called "conflict of civilizations". Once again, fairly or unfairly, rightly or wrongly, one civilization -"Western"- is perceived as being challenged or threatened by the rise of radical or militant Islam, also called "fundamentalist Islam" or, worse still, "Islamism", while some go even further and talk of "conflict", of "new wars of religion".

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- A general scenario in which the religious factor is ignored can only be understood in an extreme case of voluntary blindness, although it is rather odd that when religion emerges from confinement and its public importance in our world is acknowledged, it is rapidly draped in a cloak of negativity and becomes an instigator of conflict, if not a "casus belli".

- The Middle East is the cradle of the three monotheistic religions, but it is a narrow cradle, not so much because the region covers a relatively small area, but because all three are "totalitarian religions", inasmuch as they instil and dictate to their believers an integral vision of the Truth.

- Professor Barry Rubins maintains that US foreign policy over the last few decades has frequently misinterpreted the importance of religion in the domestic policies and international behaviour of certain countries and regions. This error has led to incorrect analyses and political responses that have had negative consequences. If previous experience were assimilated, the United States would be able to avoid conflicts in the future.

- US policy underwent a change after 9/11; a wave of military attacks tried to crush Islamic terrorism as if it were a physical enemy, an individualised target. There were those who warned that the terrorist threat could not be overcome with military resources alone, and that this reactive policy ran the risk of provoking a greater confrontation between Islam and the West. The Iraq war helped to aggravate this rupture.

- It is worth mentioning the West's syndromes with respect to the Middle East. The most important is the sense of post-colonial guilt, which blurs the view of reality on the ground and entails consequences. Related to this we find the Groucho Marx syndrome. Groucho Marx said that he would never belong to a club that would accept him as a member. This is the problem that exists with many Western liberals who, as they flagellate themselves and feel guilty, think that pro-Westerners are bad and only want to engage with the most radical, with those who curse the West. If this is combined with the force that is generated when we grant legitimacy to our interlocutors, it produces a genuine impact on the ground.

- Europe put an end to the Wars of Religion with the Treaty of Westphalia. The success of this treaty proves that there have been no more wars of religion since it was signed, and yet the Treaty was preceded by more than 30 years of fierce fighting.

- Nevertheless, Scott Thomas, in his book "Globalization, International Relations and Religion", realises that Europe is worse off after the Treaty of Westphalia, because from then on it perceives religion as a threat. Peace is an irrefutable achievement, yet Europe swings like a pendulum towards the other side, eventually believing that, given that the fundamental problem has been religion, the latter must be banished from international public dialogue. Perhaps we are now living in an era, that of globalization, in which we can recuperate religion as a factor of international dialogue, in spite of our negative legacy in this respect.

3. Diplomacy, foreign policy and religion in the Middle East

- One of the biggest differences between the situation of the Western world and the Middle East is that the religious factor is felt more intensely, is more deeply-rooted in identity and is part of the political and legal constitution of Middle Eastern countries.

- If there is one region is the world today in which the importance of religion can be clearly observed, that region is the Middle East.

- The identity-based feeling of the inhabitants of the Middle East region is rooted in religion.

- This identity is so deep-seated that each individual interprets History in terms of his religious allegiance, whether it be his own history, that of his family, that of his people or that of his country.

- A characteristic shared by all Middle Eastern countries is the presence of important religious minorities (Christian, Muslim and Jewish) and the failure of the laic experiment or of the political system based on Arab nationalism that prevailed in all the countries of the region after independence.

- The Constitutions of all the Middle Eastern countries, except Lebanon and Israel, stipulate that the religion of the State is Islam.

- In certain cases, the religious component of identity is so strong that it can tempt us to mistakenly assume that conflicts of identity are connected to religion.

- Throughout History, religion has determined political boundaries. The three major monotheistic religions have exerted their influence on politics, cultural identities and different conceptions of life over the centuries, and they will continue to do so in the future.

- In the case of the Middle East, the influence that religion exerts on society, contrary to what occurs in other parts of the world, is becoming stronger rather than weaker.

- In the Middle East, cradle of the three monotheistic religions and the faith of Abraham, religion for Jews, Christians and Muslims is not just a matter of conscience, isolated from other public affairs, as in the case in many other countries, and it has had a profound impact on politics and the culture of peoples. But in the West, too, we are witnessing a considerable increase in religiousness, and not only that: we are also witnessing the exacerbation of religious identities that proclaim to be different to the rest.

- Assuming the presence of the religious factor in this part of the world and that its omission in any analysis of international relations is an error, this error is all the more flagrant in a region in which religion is omnipresent and in which the legitimacy of many of the claims of those concerned, if not of its mere presence in the occupied territory, has a marked religious nature.

- With a view to finding ways in which religion can make a positive contribution to the region's conflicts, some of the religious aspects that influence the conflict in the Middle East are:

  1. The confessional parties. Political Islam in the region and its interaction with the Israeli Government or the Governments of Arab States and with Western countries (basically the United States and the European Union). It is impossible, from the secularist point of view, to adequately consider the political Islamic movement. A correct analysis of the spiritual foundations of Western civilization would lead to a more balanced understanding of others.

2. The role of the United States. There is a paradox in American society that has been summed up in a concise phrase: "Success with religion at home and failure abroad". Nevertheless, this is a country that has managed to find a balance between the secular and the religious. It is rather paradoxical that the American ruling class' respect toward religion has not led to an understanding with the religious representatives of another religion, Islam. In any case, there is an awareness of the need to repair the image of the United States in the Middle East, and understanding and dialogue on matters relating to religion must play a vitally important role in this task if the aim is to achieve the oft-repeated goal of "winning the minds and hearts" of Muslims.

3. A note of recognition. The United Nations opened the doors to religion in the 1940s by incorporating religious matters into what was intended to be a (provisional) solution to "the Palestinian question" with GA Resolution 181 (II) of 1947.

- Western politicians and diplomats *"have obviated on numerous occasions the importance of religion as a key factor in international relations"*.

- On occasions, the religious factor has been politically over-inflated, with subsequent negative effects, as occurred with the Lebanese "National Pact" of 1943, when the country was still under French rule: it favoured the Christian sector, put an end to Arab aspirations to "Greater Syria", led to the independence of both countries in 1946 and created a complicated internal situation in Lebanon.

- Politicians, diplomats and religious leaders should share the goal of taking the necessary steps to ensure that Middle Eastern society opens up more to reconciliation, justice and, eventually, peace.

- It is important to bear in mind the Middle East's singular historical interrelationship with Europe and with the West in general, and that the socio-political and religious culture of our Middle Eastern neighbours is in a different phase of evolution. Christianity, which was deterritorialized after the adventure of the Crusades, has its main Holy Sites in the Middle East and defends its historical rights of free access and worship (albeit to a lesser extent in recent times). It

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also has vital geo-strategic and economic interests in the region, but has no aspirations for sovereignty. Meanwhile, its concept of sovereignty has evolved toward formulas that provide for shared sovereignty solutions.

- Judaism and Islam have not progressed in the same way in terms of the deterritorialization of their religions and their concept of sovereignty. Perhaps because of having been constituted as modern nations more recently, they are closer to Bodin's concept of absolute sovereignty. Religion is not just a matter of conscience, but is interconnected with identity elements.

- In some Middle Eastern countries, Christianity has a special status, as occurs in institutionally multiconfessional Lebanon; or in Egypt, confessionally Muslim, albeit without direct application of *sharia*, with a Constitution that prohibits political parties based on ethnos or religion, and where the Coptic minority, the historical heir of the original Church founded by Saint Mark in Alexandria, is considered part of the national identity.

- In Morocco the King is Emir Al Muminim. The Saudi dynasty is considered to be the guardian of the Holy Sites, having taken over this title from the displaced Hashemites (the King of Jordan continues to claim guardianship of the Holy Sites of Jerusalem). Turkey has been constitutionally laic since Ataturk, but has recently witnessed a resurgence of Islamism. This has occurred, once again, in a period of rapid modernization and economic development, during which it has also been making an effort to converge with the European Union with a view to its admission as a Member State.

- Palestine and Israel both had important Christian minorities that have gradually emigrated under the respective pressures of Islam and Judaism, as in the cases of Bethlehem or Nazareth.

- The mixture of religion, ethnos and culture has been widely used in processes such as those of Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan, and therefore could be regarded as a widespread practice. This is also what occurred in Israel with the Arab minority, although it cannot be said that the West has not lent its encouragement at various times

and in various circumstances, so as to serve its own strategic and economic interests. Yet this should not surprise us, given what has happened in Europe itself, especially in the Balkans.

- An aspect of the region that is often ignored is its great diversity, not only in terms of the wide range of groups -Shiites, Sunnis, Catholics, Protestants, Greek Orthodox, etc.-, but also within each group. Consequently, it is thought that the Middle East region is different and that certain principles cannot be applied because the population is almost *genetically* different from the Western population. But there are no specific characteristics; the region does not demand the imposition of a dictatorship as the only way to govern, or as the only way to avoid a state of permanent war, or to not give way to fundamentalism. Middle Eastern society is affected by the same factors as any other group in the world. Therefore, it is essential to recognise this diversity and that they are human beings without specific characteristics.

- "Engagement" is not a neutral position in itself, but rather an empowerment. If the West has dealings with Hasan Nasrallah, leader of the Hizbollah party in Lebanon, to a certain extent he acquires interlocutor status. If it talks to him about the future of the Shiites, he is elevated to the category of spokesman for the Shiite community. In a sense, 85% of the Shiites in Lebanon are being prevented from giving their opinion, because Hezbollah represents only 10 or 15% of the country's Shiite population. Therefore, "engagement" is risky, because, in itself, it is a legitimation of the person being engaged with.

4. In response to the failure of nationalisms: religion as inspirer of new ideologies

- Before 1918-1920 there were no Nation-States; they were Arab provinces of the Empire. Political structures function according to Empire systems that still exist. Political systems are vertical, just like the Empires that have fallen (the Russian Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire), i.e. legitimised by the Word of God. There is a direct relationship between the Western empires that are legitimised by the Divine Word and the Ottoman Empire that uses the legitimacy of the descension of the Word of God in the Koran.

- French and British colonial policy changed the traditional strong-to-weak policy by inverting the terms. They strengthened the minorities and somehow "minoritized" the Sunni majority. This is the origin of the drift of the Muslim world, as well as the cause of the rise of the Muslim Brothers in 1928, which has gradually led to the radicalization of a traditionally moderate Sunni majority, ultimately giving rise to a political configuration in which the rules of balance have been upset.

- The failure of Arab *nationalism* has resulted in *religious nationalism*, with the creation of *political Islam*. The aim is to unite peoples of diverse origin through the nexus of religion. It claims that the governance of Arab land should be in Muslim hands (see Palestine and Iraq). This ideology was put into practice in the 19th century in the Balkans and, prior to that, Zionism used it to devise the concept of creating the State of Israel.

- The resurgence and manipulation of ethno-nationalism, as well as the spread of religious fundamentalism, both of which take increasingly violent forms, constitute a clear threat.

- The question is whether forgetting our roots could lead us into an unreal paradigm; in other words, relegating religion to the personal sphere, excluding it insofar as possible from the social and, of course, the political sphere might well be possible behind closed doors, but Western exportation of this paradigm, associated with our concept of democracy and our dominant civilization, has ended up being one of the most visible factors of discrepancy with the Islamic societies of the Middle East, which feel threatened.

- Religious nationalism first appeared in Europe and in the 19th century was adopted by Muslim intellectuals (Al Afgani and Abduh), for whom the challenge of modernising Muslim societies entails the reconciliation of political and religious life based on the two concepts of Islam: "Din wa dawl" and the universality of the Islamic Ummah.

- Hassan al-Banna (and, from the 1940s onwards, his followers) explored the idea of the Islamic nation and eventually founded the Muslim Brothers. His goal was the Islamisation of society through the implementation of *sharia*.

- This ideology was combated in all the Arab countries until the Islamic revolution in Iran, where it was demonstrated that an Islamic political system could exist and represent the wishes of the people. This idea has been reinforced by Hamas' democratic victory in the Palestinian elections. These two regimes signify religion's triumphant entry into the political sphere in the Middle East.

- Arab nationalism, whose goal is Pan-Arabism, partly achieved the aim of culturally uniting all Arab peoples (education, music, the arts, the press, etc.), but it has failed in its attempt to replace religious identity with cultural identity.

- At present in Europe, Arab nationalism is being replaced by another religious nationalism, *political Islam*, which bases its demands on criticising the regimes for their social policy and their inability to recover *historical Palestine*. They have hijacked the Marxist concept of class struggle. Muslim territory must be governed by Muslims.

- For these radicals, the "oppressed" already have religion in the Middle East; they are Muslims, and whether they are Shiites or Sunnis if of no consequence. Their enemies are the *American and Israeli crusaders,* i.e. "Christians" and "Jews".

- This type of religious nationalism is not new in History. It was adopted by Zionism to devise its concept of creating the State of Israel, the aim being to unite people from different ethnic backgrounds and different countries who had one important thing in common: religion.

- The spread of radicalisms (political Islam and Judaism) stems from the manipulation of History and the sacred texts. The case of Christians is different because they are a minority. Any attempt at *Christian nationalism* has failed (see Armenia in 1915, the Assyrians in Iraq, or the civil war in Lebanon).

- Iraq, the scene of a military occupation where a devastating civil war began instead of a democratic process, is a paradigmatic case of what happens when the invader destroys the existing power structure (the Baath party has turned into the State and the Armed Forces) without having "prefabricated" an alternative. The result is that the people

seek safety within their own clan or religious sect or another form of non-State affiliation.

- When a nation has to face up to tragedies such as this in the absence of protective State structures, citizens take refuge in their religion or in their clan, as a way of defending their threatened identity. It is a natural reaction, especially among groups who suffered for being persecuted minorities: Jews, Shiites, Druzes, Alawites, Eastern Christians.

- There exists a forging of the image of the founding myth as a means of mobilization, which plays a significant role in recruiting supporters for the terrorist cause. With regard to the latter, however, it is important to bear in mind the political motives, the psychological frustration, the ideological pressure that drives the aspiring shahid (martyr) to take the *jihad* path to the death.

- Western radical groups tend to blame their domestic crises on the Islamic presence in their territory, just as political Islam's attacks against the West are justified on the grounds of Western presence or pressure, which threaten its identity and interests.

- These feelings are reinforced insofar as the internal crises develop, and subordination of rationality easily gives way to frequently mythic interpretations. Slogans end up prevailing over the historical dimension of human relations.

- Thus, the most virulent reactions to caricatures have come from the most turbulent Islamic societies, whereas the calmest reactions come from the most moderate and stable societies. Similarly, the calls aimed at avoiding confusion between Islam and terrorism, or between religion and individual actions, have come from the societies and countries with the most confidence in their stability.

- The important thing is to try to separate the political and religious aspects from this undercurrent of controversy, and to make sure that the negative aspects are not manipulated by those who feed and exploit them.

- Religion in the Middle East has been used in some conflicts for the benefit of political interests. In the Middle East religion serves as a refuge when politics fails.

5. Religion as a stumbling block in peace processes

- The three great monotheisms have the same root: a God who has revealed Himself to men in different forms and at different times. This being the case, it is a philosophical and theological absurdity that human interpretation of these three monotheisms has served to instigate centuries of war, barbarity and fratricidal tragedies, such as those that unfortunately have marked our History.

- Then there are the "highly gifted individuals" who manipulate religion and try to create new dividing lines that superimpose themselves on existing territorial borders, boundaries that separate religions, communities and nations.

- When a military conflict is analysed, there is always, besides the economic backdrop against which the war is played out, man's desire for violence and his psychosis of hatred and destruction, an ideological or identity component. A crucial element in the Lebanese civil war (and that of the former Yugoslavia) was identity based on religious differentiations, with difference being reinforced as a means of dividing people.

- Unfortunately, fundamentalisms have converged on the Middle East, as a result of a scenario plagued with pending internal, national or regional conflicts and external interests and hegemonic rivalries that exert themselves on the region.

- The fact is that these conflicts have fed off each other to create a politicised basis of destabilization and confrontation, which has spilled over into other spheres in which religion has acquired a new dimension. The weight of the cultural religious factor has been reinforced, but the same cannot be said of its desirable positive aspect or human confluence regarding shared values and principles.

- When a religion denies the value of the individual, his right to freedom, to life, to the personal conquest of faith, it is denying itself.

- The war potential of religions stems not from religion *per se,* but from the distortion or manipulation of religion. Bearing this qualification in mind, it is obvious that there are negative connotations in the way that some individuals or groups use religion to justify acts of violence, whether it be terrorist violence or the repression of individuals, associations, confessional political parties or communities. Unfortunately, examples are plentiful.

- In our present era, terrorism, especially that which is caused by those who manipulate religion, has become a protagonist in the international arena. The resurgence and manipulation of ethno-nationalism, the spread of religious fundamentalism, which take increasingly violent forms, constitute a clear threat. The tragic consequences of the violent action of certain fundamentalist groups have raised walls of intolerance and new divisive boundaries, and this constitutes one of the biggest risks for international society in the 21st century.

- In more radical spheres (Jihad and Al-Qaeda movements, etc.), the manipulation of religious concepts is alarming; suicide is accepted as a form of martyrdom. This shifts the meaning of Jihad as effort or exertion in the cause of God towards a war against anyone who thinks differently. Defending the rights of Palestinians and liberating Iraq is an excuse to progress in the heresy of Islam.

- In the Islamic world there are those who seek to use supposedly external factors -such as theories concerning the Western world's conspiracy against Islam- to achieve internal objectives and undermine the credibility and capacity of their authorities to find political solutions; or, on the contrary, the regimes that manipulate the religious factor to justify their actions or their democratic shortcomings. And in the Western world, there are those who use the other side of this coin to justify interventionisms and unfair policies in relation to the Arab and Islamic world.

- In fact, we are immersed in a war, a war imposed by a new totalitarianism: religious totalitarianism. The Second World War and the Cold War were fought against secular totalitarianisms: Nazism and Communism. The Third World War will be a battle against religious totalitarianism, a vision of the world that says: My faith must

rule and can be asserted and sustained passionately only if all the others are denied.

- Nowadays, other entities, besides Governments, occupy the geopolitical ring. An emerging array of agents has begun to play increasingly influential roles, making relations between States and peoples, and in their own societies, more complex.

- In this category we find those sectors which seek to impose -without respecting boundaries- a new totalitarianism, that of fundamentalist religion, and which manipulate religion and try to create new dividing lines that superimpose themselves on existing territorial borders, dividing lines that separate religions, communities and nations. These sectors have become the main factors of destabilization, by using religion as a political factor of mobilization. Some leaders have assumed to themselves the right to interpret divine will in an infallible manner, generally as a way to reject dialogue with the "other", or with those who are "different". Unfortunately, all too many religious leaders have cultivated and insist on cultivating and inciting violence in the name of God and in the name of religion.

- There are people who cynically exploit religion and religious differences to incite conflict and aggressiveness. In doing so, they destroy religion's capacity to help solve troubled situations and convert it into a cause or catalyst of such situations. There are those openly incite conflict in the name of their religions and regard those who have a different interpretation of how to experience religion as political enemies to be eradicated.

- Terrorism, especially that promoted by those who manipulate religion, has become the priority issue on the international agenda. The tragic consequence of the violent actions perpetrated by certain fundamentalist groups is that walls of intolerance have been erected, and terrorist acts now demand increasing attention. It is this violent action that currently poses the greatest risks for international society, and will probably continue to do so throughout the 21st century.

- There are bloody pages of the Bible, where we find a plea to "Yahweh Sabaoth" (to the "Lord of Armies"), and other pages that call for

reconciliation. There are pages of the Koran that demand *rahma* (mercy) of the believer and a personal effort to reach a higher level of humanity (this is what the word *jihad* means), but there are also pages that prescribe the undertaking, in specific cases, of the *"small jihad"* (which we translate as "holy war"). There are pages of the Gospel -the majority- that are saturated with love for one's neighbour and forgiveness of one's enemy; but there are pages -too many- of our Christian History that are saturated with blood.

- The Austrian economist and political philosopher Friedrich von Hayek warns us about "words loaded with value", about the "tyranny of positive concepts". He was concerned about the term "social" and how it was used. There was a time when any social policy was described as "social" and presumed to be good. Many other concepts passed through this filter. In the same way, positive terms are used as concepts related to religion: If Hezbollah is the *Party of God*, nobody will object, because one cannot be against God. This is the most fertile breeding ground for demagogues, dictators and fascists. The struggle to gain this position is the toughest.

6. The contribution of religions to public life. The meaning of peace for each religion. The peacemaking will of religions

- Provider of values. Values are necessary for the common life of society as a whole. However, these values are in crisis, due to the separation between values and their original source, religion.

- Hope. Hope is particularly important and necessary for building social order, as the current President of the French Government highlighted in his book *"La République, les religions, l'espérance".*

- Religion is a dimension of human life and social organisation throughout the entire world. No society, not even the most "evolved" or "progressive", i.e. the most affluent and technologically advanced, has completely dispensed with religion; on the contrary, in many of them the religious factor is gaining presence.

- Individualism and community. Savage individualism and rapid privatization the "public" are a consequence of religion having been

pushed into a corner. Religion allows the individual to open up to the community through the exercise of solidarity.

- For the West, "laicism" permits the assessment of levels of tolerance and peace-building and the possibility of making decisions which put each individual in his place and avoid conflicts by not confronting them. This is the current trend, to avoid conflicts through a policy of seeking consensus solutions that are short-lived because they fail to get to the root of problems.

- In this critical process of values, peace has been reduced to absence of conflict, but there is no peace, or development without justice, that creates the conditions for each person or group to contribute and receive what is due to them.

- An attempt is being made to replace the revealed religions that allow people to confront transcendence with "civil religions". The latter are based on *coincident relations,* on trying to find solutions that harmonize the fewest contradictions. Unity is being sought on the basis of ignoring differences, to highlight the pragmatic dimension of issues, the everyday *praxis.* This weakens the democratic system more seriously than it may seem.

- Values are necessary not only in the private sphere, but also in the public arena. In the same way, the religious factor cannot be confined to the personal sphere; it is a communal factor, a coin with two sides, one inner and the other outer.

- Religion should foster peace and harmony. Diplomats should not ignore the important role that religious leaders can play, when they are faithful to the true spirit of their faith.

- The religious element should not be ignored, because it can constitute a positive factor in the search for peaceful solutions to the conflicts that trouble us. In a world in which the global village has erased borders, peace is not solely the responsibility of Governments.

- Overcoming religious antagonism represents a great challenge for diplomats because it offers new opportunities to "escape" from the traditional frameworks of international diplomacy in order to tackle

the challenges imposed by a new and unpredictable era. It is a matter of cooperating with religious leaders to foster peace with justice.

- The richness of religion encompasses the mission to serve. Monotheistic religions develop both a vertical relationship (God-man) and a horizontal relationship (man-man). Religion should be the element that strengthens, that allows us to confront real human problems. Besides the vertical relationship between the believer and God, a genuine monotheistic religion has a horizontal dimension, among people who share the same faith and agree on the objectives that help improve the quality of life.

- Politicians, diplomats and religious leaders should help convey a message of tolerance and respect and prevent religion from being monopolised by extremists who try to utilise it for their own benefit, or by populists who propose easy solutions.

- We should improve intra-religious communication and create a new lexicon for dialogue and for sharing the richness of our respective spiritual legacies.

- Religions can play an essential role in promoting dialogue and coexistence among different peoples and communities.

- Trying to respond to human concerns without tackling the most basic issues of social progress is a serious error that has significantly tarnished the History of mankind.

- Ideologies often seek the realization of an idea and forget the most important thing; the human being, his dignity, his freedom, his fundamental rights.

- Man's fragility has shown that the foundation of peace cannot be based on human nature. "The solid foundation of human, universal and inviolable values is found in God, to Whom we must account for our actions".

- Human violence does not stem solely from defending our interests, but also from acting on instinct. People's instincts can sweep them, both individually and collectively, to violence, event against their

own interests. Therefore, it is important to control our instincts in our relations with others. Religion should provide a framework for establishing this control, to give man the opportunity to find meanings and create a framework for peace.

- The value of peace in relation to "the other" is omnipresent in Judaism. Probably, the only way that religion can help resolve the Middle East conflicts and play a useful role in diplomacy and politics is, on the one hand, by collaborating in their rationalization and, on the other, by bringing the parties involved to a position of agreement and mutual respect.

- According to Sheikh Michael Mumisa of Cambridge University, deep-rooted stereotypes and preconceptions stem from the distance between communities and can even result in the dehumanization of the "other". There is more in common between Judaism and Islam and their communities than is commonly thought.

- Among religion's positive contributions to the resolution of conflicts, it is worth mentioning the previous Pope's call for a peaceful end to the Cold War, accepted by practically all the analysts of the history of the conflict, the contribution of the Catholic and Protestant clergy to the reduction of violence in Northern Ireland, the Holy See's mediation in resolving the Beagle Channel dispute between Argentina and Chile, the mediation of religious leaders between the Government and guerrilla leaders in Mozambique (Community of St. Egidio), the role of religious leaders in the peaceful transition in South Africa, the Philippines and Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, or the reconciliation between France and Germany.

- Every effort to separate the religious factor from the political factor -particularly the negative aspects of the former- and to seek a basis of understanding to strengthen religion's positive influence is essential.

7. Religion, identity and dialogue

- Numerous conflicts have their roots in confrontations due to religious motives, and in most cases diplomacy is not capable of dealing with conflicts of this nature.

- Religion is perceived as an obstacle to the peaceful solution of conflicts, especially when religion influences the conception of collective life of the peoples involved and of their national identities, as occurs in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

- The introduction of religious motives in a conflict generally implies the inclusion of elements that impede reconciliation between the parties. A conflict based on national rivalries is nearly always open to a solution, and even to an agreement.

- The religious components of some conflicts and the resurgence of movements that can cause indescribable damage in the name of God and religion can only be redirected through permanent and in-depth dialogue among religions, aimed at overcoming misunderstandings, intolerance and confrontation.

- Interreligious dialogue among Jews, Christians and Muslims is crucial for achieving coexistence and cooperation among these peoples.

- Self-interested exploitation of the faith of believers has not been tackled adequately by religious leaders who teach the true values of their religion. These values have yet to become the catalysts of a genuine reconciliation in a context of peace.

- Lack of identity arises when a person refuses to engage in dialogue, because he is renouncing communication, when one ceases to fight this extraordinary battle that involves "opening up", when one stops trying to convince the "other" without needing to defeat him.

- At the same time, dialogue is the best way to analyse one's own convictions, because when we fully understand what we think, what we feel, what we believe, we can try to explain it.

- Dialogue develops a strong sense of identity, and the questions and difficulties posed by the "other" force us to reflect, to resolve our own contradictions, to achieve greater coherence. In short, in identity and dialogue lies the very strength of our faith.

- Coexistence of religions. Dialogue begins in the educational environment. Jews, Muslims and Christians should have common

educational spheres (nursery school, secondary and university education), because they are the best scientific contexts, where people encounter real problems, where dialogue is constructed. However, this fact should not mean renouncing religion and one's own convictions, and should not lead to what we might call "civil religion", understood as a religion of "good practice".

- If the transcendent dimension of life and personal responsibility were borne in mind, laicity would not degenerate into laicism or clericalism. To stop this happening, two paths must be kept open; on the one hand, the possibility of acknowledging the transcendent dimension of life, i.e. acknowledging the importance of natural law as the organising principle of an effective dialogue among different cultures, and, at the same time, confronting it with personal realities.

- Religious authorities should demand coherent behaviour from their faithful and should not accept denial of the value of the individual (freedom, personal conquest of his own faith, etc.). Coherence in behaviour, in word, in not falling into easy anonymity, but above all this, it is essential to recognise the coherence of the "other" in his faith and not to accept as coherent behaviour, under any circumstances, the denial of our greatest value, the only one that is not negotiable: the value of the individual.

- In the dialectic between identity and dialogue, each person should defend his own identity and the values he believes in, but this should never lead to a lack of dialogue, or to an aggressive or violent dialogue and, even less, to violent conduct.

- There is no point in simply demanding the application of Western models that are regarded as unfair or detrimental to the integrity of identity and beliefs. The adoption of Western models must be a process of mutual persuasion, in which effort should be focused on dialogue, on achieving consensus, on reciprocity and on solidarity.

8. Possible new political models in the Middle East. Church-State separation

- For a long time now, European societies, the majority of which have Christian roots, have turned a deaf ear to the command that says

"give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's". Up until the end of the Thirty Years War and the Peace of Westphalia, it had proved impossible to put an end to the wars of religion that laid waste to Europe, and the tragedies caused by the political-religious factor during the last century are all too familiar. The separation of *States and religion* is relatively recent, an evolution determined by Judeo-Christian humanism, without which the Enlightenment, the French Revolution or the basic concept of the fundamental rights of the individual would probably not have arisen.

- We Westerners have not managed or wanted to sufficiently encourage that reflection and dialogue, neither in private nor in public. There have been plenty of occasions on which, perhaps unthinkingly, we have made use of the religious factor for political purposes. Incidentally, it is worth remembering that Huntington's theory of the "clash of civilizations" has not been articulated by Islam, but by the breeding ground of American neo-conservatism, in the political context of its global strategy since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

- In 1995 the European Union initiated, as a Euro-Mediterranean regional alternative to that scenario, the Barcelona Process, whose Declaration, adopted with its Southern partners, was full of good principles and good intentions. Chapter III included dialogue among religions, but paradoxically it was not the object of any initiative.

- Dialogue on the religious factor has been the subject of many interreligious meetings and seminars in recent years, especially those connected with the Peace Process in the Middle East, Jerusalem and the Holy Sites; however, this interreligious dialogue has essentially been limited, so far, to theological or generic aspects. These meetings have not tackled practical, concrete issues such as those arising from the exercise of religious freedom as a fundamental right. Although all "Westerners" take these rights for granted, the legal status of their focus and development in the various internal legislations is not the same in all cases. The Islamic confessional vision of the majority of Muslims, albeit with different situations and to varying degrees, makes the issue rather sensitive and there is a reluctance to enter into too many specific details.

- In this sphere in the European Union, the first steps have been taken on a path toward "harmonization" of the status of the different religious denominations and the internal regulations or agreements with them at State level, which regulate their rights, institutions and practices. This is a broad sphere that encompasses aspects ranging from the situation of minorities (immigrants) to social issues such as education, freedom of expression, right of assembly, etc., not to mention economic and fiscal issues. This effort could encourage a hitherto non-existent worldwide application of the principle of freedom of conscience and religion, which has yet to be legally and conventionally specified to a sufficient degree.

- The change in the regional and world scenario brought about by the policy undertaken by the United States since 9/11, under the justification of the existential threat and global fight against terrorism, has left the Barcelona Process neglected and diminished, although not completely dead and buried. The European vision has suffered the consequences of this strategic globalization both internally and in its regional policy. It has maintained its presence and the essence of its principles, its cooperation policy and its welfare efforts, but its political prominence and capacity for dialogue have been affected.

- The Council of Chalcedon (5th century), which definitively established the dual (human and divine) nature of Christ, permitted an evolution toward the separation between Church and State and led to something more profound, one of the signs of Modernity: the emergence of the individual. In Islam and Judaism, the most absolute monotheisms, neither the idea of separation between the spiritual and the temporal nor the modern concept of the individual exist -the case of Judaism is more complex because there are schools of thought within Western Judaism that incorporate the Western world's idea of the *individual*-. Nevertheless, for Islam divine nature corresponds to the "*tanzil*", the "sending down" of the Word of God in the Koran, but there is no incarnation or human nature. Today it is crucial to maintain the Divine message of the Koran while at the same time finding a way to reintroduce something that goes beyond the clan spirit, beyond communitarianism, `*asabiya* (solidarity, social cohesion), because if we do not find a way to make man within Islam something more

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than the member of a community, or of a religion, we are paralysed in relation to modernity.

- The systems and regimes in the Middle East are based on clan spirit, on the spirit that in Arabic is called `asabiya, the tribal spirit. What counts above all are blood ties, family ties, endogamous marriages, that religion reinforces these tribal and clan ties. Nowadays, however, attempts are being made to impose certain structures on the Arab-Muslim world, democratic, horizontal structures which are still too young for this region, and which the people and intellectuals find difficult to understand, because they are used to vertical legitimations.

- For Islam, the question of the separation between Church and State is a Western concept, in which the State takes precedence over the Church, in which the problem of diversity arises when the Law derives from the Constitution.

- During the Ottoman Empire, the State was profoundly decentralized; each community administrated its affairs in accordance with its own laws, and each sharí'a was able to make its own interpretation. Thus, it became patently clear that diversity was incorporated into society and there was less conflict between religion and the State. The imposition of a secular State and the Rule of Law in a diverse society generates conflicts.

- The administrative structure of the Ottoman Empire -which forms part of the historical background of the present-day Middle East- was decentralized and the Nation-State concept did not exist until the West burst onto the scene. This fact has a great deal to do with Church-State separation, because if there is no Nation-State structure, the question of separation does not arise. It is worth asking ourselves the following question: to what extent has the Nation-State concept been alien to Islamic countries and to the concept of *umma*, of Islamic community?

- The other model that has existed in the region is the Ottoman model, which possibly achieved a better separation between Church and State. In Lebanon, or even in Israel, civil law was not applied to matters regarded as belonging to the religious sphere (family law,

for example). Thus, all the religious communities, whether Muslim, Christian or Jewish, have been able to develop an institutional framework and a body of legislation and, therefore, there is no State hegemony over any of them. It could be concluded that this is a more appropriate application of the liberal principles of the separation between "what is God's and what is Caesar's", instead of the hegemony of one over the other.

- During the British Mandate of Palestine, the Jewish community devised a model of State-religion relations that is practically impossible to modify today. A complex political balance in Israel prevents it for the time being, hence the failure of any attempt to separate the State from religion for internal reasons and also because of the pressure from the Arab Muslim and Christian minority. This attitude is aggravated by the Israeli conflict, especially with the Palestinians. The vast majority of Israeli society wants Church-State separation, to one extent or another, but the groups that object to it exploit their position as the faithful (judge) in the balance of power, to the detriment of the majority of the population and the Muslims and Christians.

9. Dialogue initiatives. Encouraging elements

- Catholic sphere. The Second Vatican Council's *Nostra Aetate* Declaration marked a milestone. The French Jew Jules Isaac defended the necessary reconciliation between Christianity and Judaism in order to put an end to what he accurately defined as "the culture of contempt". The *Nostra Aetate* Declaration also paved the way for dialogue with Islam, creating a more favourable climate for tackling the issue of the status of the Holy Sites. Pope John Paul II promoted understanding with numerous initiatives.

- The isolation of the Holy See and the desire not to be marginalized in the Middle East peace process, initiated at the Madrid Conference (1991), were strong incentives for the harmonization of relations with Israel and with the Palestinians, but without the *Nostra Aetate* Declaration the process would probably have been slower.

- Has there been reciprocity? Has the Western socio-political world made an effort to achieve it? Although the "culture of contempt" has

practically disappeared from relations between Judaism and Christianity -although violent minority groups of a racist type still remain-, it unfortunately seems to have shifted, gradually, to relations between Christianity and Islam.

- There have been some commendable initiatives, such as the *Alliance of Civilizations,* which has incorporated earlier ideas, but with the merit of raising them to a larger sphere, that of the United Nations. However, given the necessary catharsis in which the international organisation is immersed, the results will be seen in the long term and at present they have little influence on Middle Eastern societies. The same applies to the execution of projects such as *Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA).*

- Other promising initiatives:

  1. Those of Prince Ghazi of Jordan and that of the King of Saudi Arabia, both of whom have proposed an in-depth analysis of the shared significance of the three monotheistic religions in relation to the dignity of man and the search for common values among them.

  2. Those of civil society, such as those of the Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture (FPSC, Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura) and its partners in all the Middle Eastern countries, which aim to support and promote projects and programmes whose objectives are coexistence, the protection of human rights and the implementation of Rule of Law. One of the goals achieved with these initiatives is keeping alive the hopes of people who suffer hardship or difficulties.

- The Alliance of Civilizations and the interreligious dialogue initiatives are two different things. One is a political-diplomatic initiative, whereas the others are religious initiatives, although they are complementary. They may also be attempts to give a serious response to the religious legitimation of political authority, avoiding manipulations.

- In October 2007, 138 scholars, intellectuals and clerics representing all the Muslim denominations (Sunnis, Shiites, Ishmaelites) signed an

open missive addressed to the Pope and to the leaders of other Christian denominations, in which they called for interreligious dialogue. The Vatican responded by asking an interconfessional work group to organise a Catholic-Muslim Forum, which will take place in Rome on 4th-6th November 2008. The topics will be: "Love of God, love for one's neighbour, human dignity and mutual respect".

- Interreligious dialogue in the Holy Land is not an option; it is an essential requirement. This dialogue began with sporadic contacts among all the religions and culminated in the creation of the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land, in which the three religions are represented at the highest level.

- The *Alexandria Declaration*, signed by religious authorities on 21st January 2002, reiterates essential principles such as the rejection of violence or the need to ensure the exercise of religious freedom.

- The *Dibru Emet* Declaration, a Jewish initiative concerning relations between Christians and Jews, was prepared by a group of more than 70 Jewish theologians and intellectuals and contains some clauses aimed at working together for justice and peace.

- On 25th February 2008, a "Call to Peace, Dialogue and Understanding between Jews and Muslims" was issued by a group of Muslim scholars, including Sheikh Michael Mumisa of Cambridge University, stating that "Many Jews and Muslims today stand apart from each other due to feelings of anger, which in some parts of the world translate into violence". "It is our contention" -the letter continues- "that we are faced today not with 'a clash of civilizations' but with 'a clash of ill-informed misunderstandings'. Deep-seated stereotypes and prejudices have resulted in a distancing of the communities and even a dehumanizing of the 'Other'." "There is more in common between our religions and peoples than is known to each of us".

- The International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultation (IJCIC), which represents the Jewish world in dealings with other religions, has responded with the declaration entitled "Seek Peace and Pursue It", which states that precisely because "there is now a dangerous and widespread misconception that an innate hostility exists between Judaism and Islam", it is important to affirm "the

dynamic history of interaction that our communities have shared with one another". The declaration adds that "leaders of our respective religious communities have a particular mandate to highlight the common repudiation in Judaism and Islam of murder, violence, injustice and indignity", and invites Muslims to help develop this dialogue "in pursuit of a world made better through our efforts".

10. Dialogue initiatives. Impediments

- Islamic radicalism. The unjustified invasion of Iraq, the war in Afghanistan and the continuing presence in Muslim territory of thousands of "crusaders" (as supporters of the *"jihad"* call the Western armies) stimulate theological debate from Casablanca to the madrasas of Pakistan. It is very enlightening to follow on Internet the confrontation between Zawahiri, Bin Laden's number two, and Imam el-Sherif, Zawahiri's spiritual mentor in Egypt. From his prison in Cairo, Imam el-Sherif published an "auto-da-fe" repudiating the armed struggle. From his cave in the Afghan mountains, Zawahiri now replies with 358-page document in which he reaffirms his reasons and his unfailing faith in the validity of the armed struggle - a theological rather than political diatribe that evokes the Europe of the Middle Ages.

- Christian integrism. The *"neo-con"* wave that has inundated the United States and part of Europe does not encourage the use of reason in dealing with *"infidels"*. Ignorance of the theological and moral principles that enrich other religions breeds fear and suspicion in Europe and, above all, in America.

- Emigration of Middle Eastern Christians. Middle Eastern Christians number a few million and constitute an incomparable richness. In Iraq, only a third of the one and a half million Syrians and Chaldeans remain since emigration began. Nothing justifies emigration, not even the recent death of the Chaldean bishop of Mosul. In Lebanon, Christians -more numerous than Muslims- have been emigrating since the early 20th century. In Egypt, the Copts, in spite of being the largest Christian minority in the Middle East, seem to be undergoing a worrying decline.

- The legacy of the protection of Western powers is the sense of an historical obligation to defend the minorities or the majorities, or to

reconcile them. The relationship with the West is extremely complex, particularly in political circles, where there is a considerable institutional discrepancy that shows no sign of being resolved. This is one of the major problems facing diplomats and politicians.

- An example: If there were people willing to find a solution and they decided that this involved promoting, for example, secularism, or interreligious relations, and if this group had sufficient influence to convert this decision into political action, the decision would be approved, it would form part of a strategy, it would have a budget and a schedule, it would have a life of its own for five years (because budget headings have this duration in Brussels, in the major European capitals). There would be civil servants working on this action and NGOs would be hired, etc. It would turn into something rigid, whereas the thought process is fluid. The group might meet again and change its opinion due a change in circumstances, or owing to an error of judgement. Decisions change when circumstances change. But when this happens, when the concept being promoted is totally different to one that was being developed on the ground, the consequences multiply due to the intervention of numerous agents and interlocutors. There could be Swedes proposing one initiative, Italians another, Americans in favour of a different policy. All these policies would come into conflict and generate chaos in the region. The inflexibility of the plans is worrying, and yet there is little that can be done about it, because it is simply has to be taken into account when dealing with this region.

- Interreligious dialogue is a very complex concept. It is assumed that people with different beliefs should engage in dialogue to resolve problems. However, as was stated by the Ambassadors who attended the Seminar, it is easier to bring Israelis and Palestinians together than it is to arrange a gathering of certain Palestinians or certain Israelis. Intrareligious dialogue among people of the same faith, or who share the same ideas, is as important as dialogue among different religions.

- The problem lies, as has been perceived in the context of the Barcelona Process, in the fact that these dialogues take place within the framework of conventions, conferences, seminars, etc., at governmental, expert, specialised institute, NGO or academic level,

and generally end up in a closed circuit that does not extend to public opinion. Until the scenario is broadened and given greater resonance, these efforts will be laudable but will have little impact on the collective subconscious and fail to stimulate the Governments and the political classes which tend to consider or use religion in a limited way and only when it suits them, and which often seem prey to a complex that prevents them from taking a natural approach to the positive potential of religion.

11. Role of NGOs in the reconciliation of peoples. Creation of a performance model through the work of NGOs. Experience of education in religious values

- Cooperation among believers of different religions is both necessary and possible.

- Education in the family, at places of worship and at school, as well as through the media, could increase trust and collaborate with politicians to build a healthier society.

- If we want peace and security, we must pursue justice and integrity and the only way to do it is by rolling up our sleeves and getting our hands dirty.

- Mar Elías Educational Institutions: "Our schools have never been exclusively for Catholics." The Mons. Chacour School built in Ibillin in 1982 started with 80 children and today it has 4,500 pupils, the majority Muslims, although there are 82 Jewish children.

- Mons. Chacour: "The first day they came to school I was worried. It hadn't been easy to convince the parents to send their children to the school. But once they were there, I feared the behaviour of the Israelis and the Palestinians, together in small classrooms. So we decided that they wouldn't have classes on the first day. We hired four coaches and organised a trip to Mount Carmel, for everyone. When they returned in the afternoon, the Jews and Palestinians seemed to have forgotten their differences. They exchanged e-mail addresses, telephone numbers and postal addresses. They discovered that they were just young people, boys and girls.

- Mons. Chacour: "When Jews attacked the Basilica of the Annunciation, Ehud Olmert called me and said that they were against that type of action. I thanked him, but told him that it wasn't enough. "What should we do?", he asked. I suggested that he set up a committee to study the Jewish and Palestinian primary school textbooks, to assess the image of the "others" being taught to the children. That would be an essential contribution. That's what we do in our schools; for our pupils, Israel is not a foreign entity, an enemy, but a country with plans, with dreams, a country with a history, with suffering, with the hope that everything will get better for them and for others.

- One of the keys to solving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is education, the education of the younger generations. The education of our children will determine how they behave when they grow up. If you teach children that they are better than everyone else, they will always think they are better. If you teach them that the "other" is the potential enemy, they will always look for the enemy in the "other". This is the worst thing we can do. However, we should teach them that the "other" is not a hidden threat, but a new challenge, whoever it may be. All this is achieved through education.

- Civil society initiatives, such as those of the FPSC and its partners, who carry out programmes whose aims are coexistence, the protection of human rights and institutional strengthening.

- Initiatives such as those of young Saudis who, through Internet, steer religion away from the path of radical heresy.

V. Conclusions

1. Political leaders should explore the positive potential that religion
    can exert in the resolution of conflicts, above all because secular or
    religious fundamentalism cannot be combated with weapons alone.
    It is a war which should be fought mainly in schools, mosques,
    churches and synagogues, and which can only be won with the help
    of the religious leaders of the three monotheistic religions, those who
    promote the opposite of totalitarianism, an ideology of pluralism, an
    ideology that encourages religious diversity, and that faith itself can
    be nourished without elitisms.

2. Religion transmits values, among them peace and reconciliation.
    Therefore, diplomats should not ignore the important role that
    religious leaders can play, when they are loyal to the true spirit of
    their faith, when they guide believers by conveying the true
    message of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, which is a message of
    peace.

3. In the Middle East various local conflicts combine to threaten the
    stability of entire regions and countries. Terrorism, especially that
    promoted by those who manipulate religion, has become the
    priority issue on the international agenda, because the threat of
    easy access to non-conventional weapons is no longer a hypothetical
    matter.

4. An effort should be made to curb the tendency to distort the true
    nature of religion to achieve certain purposes, given that it creates
    the erroneous conviction that the sacrifice of one's own life merits
    eternal bliss, as well as a model to be imitated by the community of
    believers. This manipulation of religion can only be countered by
    means of a permanent and in-depth dialogue among those religious
    authorities that promote the true message of their religion, such that
    they become catalysts of a genuine reconciliation in a context of
    peace.

5. Politicians, diplomats and religious leaders should:

    • Help to convey a message of tolerance and respect that emphasises
      what unites peoples and respects what divides them.

- Prevent religion from being monopolised by extremists who try to use it for their own benefit and by populists who propose easy solutions.

- Make an effort to improve communication by creating a new lexicon for dialogue and for sharing the richness of our respective religious legacies. In a situation of conflict or dispute partly or totally rooted in religion, it is necessary to turn to the conceptual aspects of religion and its linguistic expression when it comes exploring and perhaps finding solutions.

6. If politicians and diplomats are aware of the importance of religion in peacebuilding, they will be capable of establishing formal and informal means to cooperate with religious leaders, which include:

- Recognising the defining nature of the spiritual elements that are present in conflicts between peoples and communities.

- Devising actions to overcome the ignorance that exists with regard to the importance of religion, both in the diplomatic system of analysis and in the political establishment.

- Establishing actions to ensure that members of parliament and civil servants become more involved in interreligious relations.

7. Not adding to the confusion between Islam and terrorism, or between religion and individual actions.

8. Separating the religious factor from the political factor -particularly the negative aspects of the former- and seek a basis of understanding to strengthen religion's positive influence.

9. Assessing the different historical evolution of the three Middle Eastern monotheistic religions:

- Christianity has been deterritorialized since the Crusades, although its main Holy Sites are in the Middle East and it has defended its historical rights of free access and worship. It also has vital geo-strategic and economic interests in the region, but has no

aspirations for sovereignty. Its concept of sovereignty has evolved toward formulas that provide for shared sovereignty solutions.

- Judaism and Islam, on the other hand, have not progressed in the same way in terms of the deterritorialization of their religions and their concept of sovereignty. Perhaps because of having been constituted as modern nations more recently, they are closer to the concept of absolute sovereignty. Religion is not just a matter of conscience, but is interconnected with other identity elements.

10. The separation of State and religion is a relatively recent Western concept, resulting from the evolution of Judeo-Christian humanism. The Western exportation of this paradigm, associated with our concept of democracy and our dominant civilization, constitutes a threat for Islamic societies. Efforts must be geared towards mutual persuasion, centred on dialogue, on achieving consensus, on reciprocity and on solidarity.

11. In recent years, the subject of dialogue on the religious factor has been dealt with at numerous meetings, interreligious seminars or by what, in the Barcelona framework, is called "civil society", especially in connection with the Peace Process in the Middle East, Jerusalem and the Holy Sites. In the case of Spain, it is worth highlighting the work of the Foundation Three Cultures (Fundación Tres Culturas), the seminars of the Toledo International Centre for Peace (Centro Internacional de Toledo para la Paz), etc. This interreligious dialogue has been limited mainly to theological or generic aspects. However, it has not tackled practical issues that affect all the members of the Barcelona Association, and especially those arising from the exercise of religious freedom as a fundamental right.

12. In the European Union, there is a long way to go on the road toward "harmonization" in this area, given the variety of legal approaches and national legislations. This harmonization must address the status of the different religious denominations and the internal regulations or agreements with them at State level, which regulate their rights, institutions and practices.

13. This harmonization could encourage a necessary development, the worldwide application of the principle of freedom of conscience and

religion, generally acknowledged as a part of the fundamental human rights, but still not conventionally and legally specified to a sufficient degree in many countries.

14. Religious freedom is an inalienable fundamental right, although for the Islamic confessional vision of the majority of Muslims, it is a delicate issue. They are reluctant to outline concepts, and therefore the exercise of religious freedom must be carried out prudently and gradually.

15. It is easier to bring Israelis and Palestinians together in the same room than it is to arrange a gathering of certain Palestinians or certain Israelis. Intrareligious dialogue among people of the same faith is as important as dialogue among different religions. Interreligious dialogue is essential in order to avoid the high risk of totalitarianism.

16. The West tends to reduce religious diversity to secular monism, which is a mistake, because it implies evading the problem without solving it. Diversity is not a danger, but a source of richness. Therefore, eliminating this diversity to facilitate the resolution of problems is to deny the diverse and non-monolithic nature of the three major religions. In the Middle East there has been a long tradition of multicultural coexistence, and the identity and existence of the "other" is recognised; there is even a system that acknowledges diversity.

17. Identity and dialogue go hand in hand. We say that an identity without dialogue necessarily leads to solitude, or, if it is the product of arrogance, identity results in an attempt to subjugate others. On the other hand, a dialogue without identity necessarily leads to a kind of anonymity or to a greater susceptibility to manipulation. We all have the responsibility to cultivate identity and dialogue simultaneously. Our mature identity gathers strength insofar as it manifests itself in a capacity to engage in a dialogue with others, and, simultaneously, dialogue should reinforce our identity, as a relationship of opening up to others. The West has diluted identity in dialogue because it thinks that it is only possible by denying what differentiates us from the "other", by secularizing society. Hence its failure to understand part of the Middle East problem.

18. Dialogue should transcend the closed circuit of conventions, conferences, seminars, i.e. the sphere of governments, experts, specialised institutes, NGOs and academia. Dialogue should reach the street and extend to public opinion. Until this step is taken, broadening the scenario and giving it resonance, these efforts will be laudable but will have little impact on the collective subconscious.

19. Religion is a present, dynamic and influential factor in the public sphere in general, and in the field of international relations in particular.

20. Religion can be a source of conflicts, but also a factor in pursuing and achieving peace.

21. It is both unrealistic and ineffective to carry on using the policy of ignoring, by action or omission, religion as an important factor in international relations.

22. Politicians and, secondarily, diplomats, should incorporate the religious factor in negotiation processes through the conceptual channel and through language, and should not only accept but also actively seek the inclusion of religious representatives in these processes.

23. The presence of these religious representatives is crucial for explaining and conveying the agreements reached.
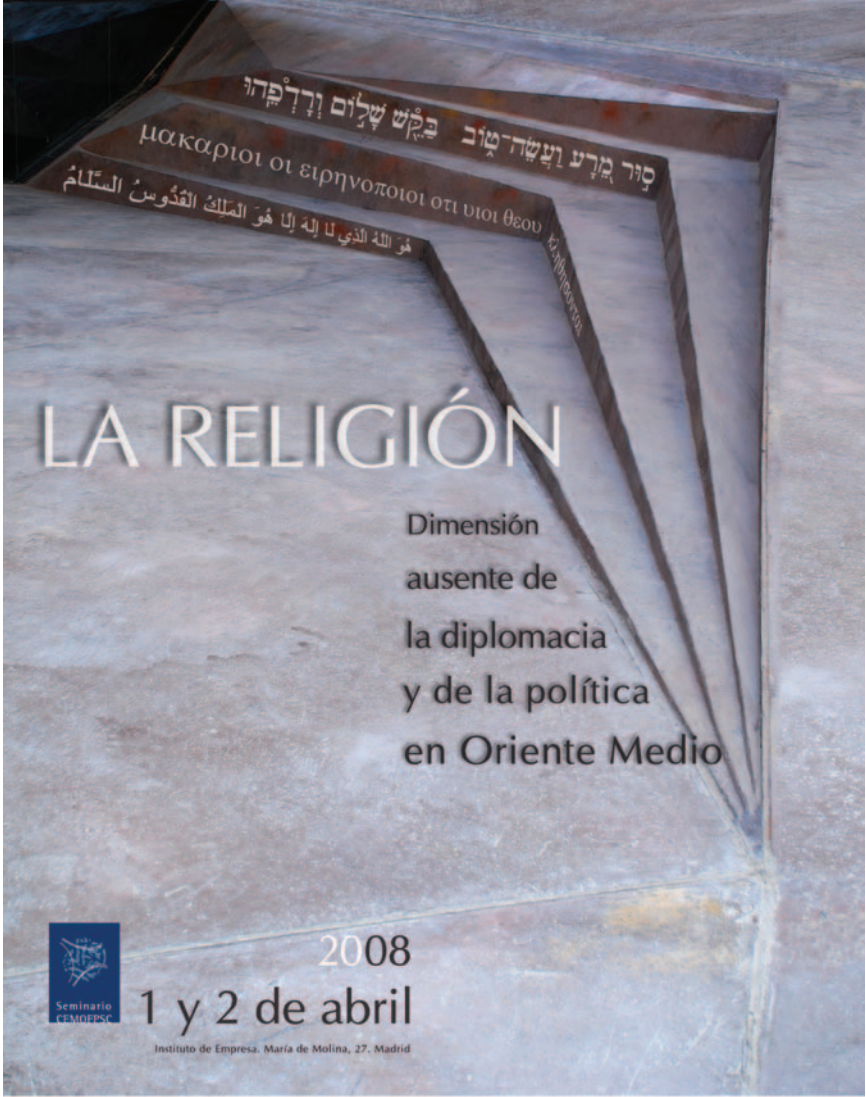
VI. Recomendations

- There are four steps that politicians and diplomats should take when operating in the international sphere in order to properly take into account the religious factor:

  1. Acknowledge its importance and include it in talks and negotiations.

  2. Find support for negotiations in the sacred texts, since they carry a lot of weight for believers.

  3. Include religious representatives in international negotiation processes. The decentralized structure of some of these religions and creeds makes this difficult, although it is not an insurmountable obstacle, given that a 'single-voice' representation is not necessary.

  4. Use religious channels to spread or convey messages about the processes or results achieved among the communities.

- If the foreseeable future does not offer much cause for optimism, let us be cautiously optimistic and try to change things.

- Transforming a scenario of death in which the capacity to reason is renounced should be the goal of anyone who tries to reflect on their faith, on their religion, from a political perspective. The present situation requires finding common ground through reason, as one of the best unifying elements.

- We suggest that a proposal to guarantee respect for religious freedom be addressed to the United Nations General Assembly. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and, in our opinion, this right is one of least respected.

- Dialogue with religions should deal with specific topics and involve the appropriate interlocutors. Great care should be taken to prevent those who violate rights and laws and pursue political ends through arguments and practices apparently linked to the religious sphere from setting themselves up as spokesmen for religions, denominations

or communities. There is no such thing as a monolithic Judaism, Christianity or Islam, so they can hardly be represented by a single spokesman. Each religion is rich because of its diversity of denominations, rites and tendencies. The most serious risk involves a minority group, an armed group, or a group with a high media profile, setting itself up -either openly or furtively- as the representative of silent majorities who in no way share that ideology.

- If dialogue does not have a delimited content or a performative purpose aimed at actions, specific practices and a sensible choice of interlocutors, it is very unlikely to be fruitful.

- We cannot apply our perceptions or our firm beliefs *mutatis mutandis* to other peoples, other countries or other religious expressions which are simply going through a different stage of evolution.

- Education is the key to solving the problem; education not only of young people, but also of adults, of parents. Opting for education is an arduous and complicated task, because working with prejudiced mentalities, with preconceived ideas, with distorted memories, hinders the process.

VII. Questions for reflection

- Can religion contribute to dialogue among nations instead of being a factor of discrepancy in the international community? Can religion open up channels of dialogue and reduce tensions and serve as a bridge wherever secular factors have failed?

- The definitive separation between religious power and civil power could be the central problem in Middle Eastern countries.

- The three great monotheistic religions have exerted their influence on politics, cultural identities and different conceptions of life throughout the centuries and will continue to do so in the future.

- Seminars and meetings on interreligious dialogue should transcend the most abstract theological questions and descend to specific agreements, such as recognition of the universal principle of freedom of conscience, which results in the right, guaranteed by legitimate authorities, to freely choose and practice one's religion. These meetings should not be reduced to mere experiments *in vitro,* to debates among experts, but should penetrate the different layers of society and the State and lead to concrete actions.

- A legal harmonization of the principle of religious freedom in the European Union is necessary to reinforce a common position on the religious phenomenon, as well as to accommodate the diversity of denominations within the framework of a single legal regulation.

- Education should be based on respect for diversity and for religious discrepancy in mosques, synagogues and churches, as an effective tool in the fight against fanaticism.

- Diplomacy and the role of religion in reconciling peoples. Why are religious leaders excluded from peace processes?

בקש שלום ורדפהו
סור מרע ועשה־טוב

μακαριοι οι ειρηνοποιοι οτι υιοι θεου

هُوَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ المَلِكُ القُدُّوسُ السَّلامُ

LA RELIGIÓN

Dimensión
ausente de
la diplomacia
y de la política
en Oriente Medio

Seminario
CEMOFPSC

2008
1 y 2 de abril

Instituto de Empresa. María de Molina, 27. Madrid

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Centro de Estudios de Oriente Medio
Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura

VIII. Appendix I. The case of Jerusalem and the Holy Land

An illuminating case is the European position regarding Jerusalem and the Holy Sites. Up until the 20th century, the religious-cultural-economic element acquired an international dimension that manifested itself in the system of capitulations and formed the basis of the approaches to Jerusalem when the process of decolonization of Palestine began after the break-up of the Ottoman Empire. Europe actively participated in the debates that led to the British Mandate of Palestine (article 13, devoted to the safeguarding of religious aspects, is key in this respect), and when the Mandate came to an end, the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 181 (II) of 29th November 1947 ("Future Government of Palestine", more commonly known as Partition), which provided for the creation of two States, one Arab and the other Jewish, as well as a temporary international status for Jerusalem and Bethlehem, the *"Corpus Separatum"*, which was never applied owing to the Arab-Israel conflict after the Declaration of Independence of Israel (14th May 1948), sparked by Arab nationalism's rejection of the partition of Palestine and the occupation of the Holy City by Israel and Jordan in the 1948 War.

Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967 meant that the approach focused on that fact, its treatment being brought into line with that of the other occupied Palestinian territories (UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 336). Both parties' political claims concerning the capital status of Jerusalem pushed the international cultural-religious aspect even further toward the margins.

The framework established at the Madrid Conference in 1991 and its subsequent development, which led to the Oslo Accords between Israelis and Palestinians, has sanctioned the bilateralization of the negotiation process, which tends to also extend to cultural and religious aspects of international interest, in spite of the UNESCO Resolutions, and in spite of the Holy See and other religious authorities demanding that they be given a separate treatment, *"supra partes"*, that would lead to an internationally guaranteed special status which the parties would have to respect whatever their understanding of the political-territorial future may be. The "Jerusalem at the end" theory has not prevented the parties from acting on the ground for many years, trying to prejudge that future in their favour. The marginalization of the international religious aspect has not helped facilitate the political-territorial rapprochement; instead,

the facts prove that the religious factor has reinforced nationalist extremism. The theory of "constructive ambiguity", which Henry Kissinger introduced into the peace process, or absence thereof, has had effects that very few people now regard as anything but disturbing and negative: each party concerned has interpreted the successive UN resolutions according to its whim, and in the end the agreements reached have not been fulfilled. The international order and its legality have been seriously affected. In fact, the situation has given way to new doctrines, such as that of "constructive destruction", as a hypothesis for establishing a new order... which one?... that of the *Novus Ordo Seclorum"* motto which, together with other more or less esoteric symbols, appears on an old green bill.

In the successive European approaches to the Peace Process, the political and territorial conflict took precedence as religious factor was gradually forgotten, largely due to the attitude and pressure of Zionist and Islamic nationalism. Europe gradually abandoned its secular religious *leitmotif* in the Holy Land, having been preceded on this path by the United States, which, however, in the letters attached to the Camp David Accords of 1979, still recognised a position similar to Europe's. Moreover, if Europe has been consistent in considering East Jerusalem as occupied territory (applicability of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 CS), in the sphere of cultural-religious "international" interest, which is where it really had an historical *locus standi",* its position has fluctuated as wildly as that of its members with regard to the religious factor and other determinants.

The Venice Declaration of 13th June 1980 included, in point 8, a brief but sufficient reference to international interests in Jerusalem. A very diminished version of the initial proposal also appears in point 2 of the Florence Declaration (22nd June 1996).

The European Union turned a deaf ear to the Holy See's Non-Paper of 1993, which proposed the inclusion of religious-cultural aspects on the multilateral side of the peace process, and the weakness of its attitude to the issue did not change.

Over the last decade, things have followed the same course, even if there has been the odd commendable and short-lived effort to revive and make progress in this religious-cultural aspect.

Today there is no doubting the central nature that the Jerusalem question has always had and continues to have, on both planes, with regard to any permanent and comprehensive resolution of the conflict. The Islamic factor transcends the bilateral Israeli-Palestinian framework and to some extent conditions it. The same occurs with Judaism. Given the positions of those concerned, the religious factor could block the rest if it is not given an outlet. This already happened at Camp David and at Taba in the year 2000, which was the moment when the parties came closest to reaching a general framework agreement. Can the separate treatment of religious aspects still facilitate it?

However, religion has traditionally been considered as a strictly theological matter in the West, both by political leaders and by political theorists or diplomats, and the importance and impact of religious phenomena on international relations have been obviated on numerous occasions. Thus, political leaders are not always willing to explore the positive potential that religion can exert in the resolution of conflicts, or to deal with the religion factor when attempting to resolve some of the conflicts that afflict us.

IX. Appendix II. Schedule of the international seminar "Religion: The Missing Dimension of the Diplomacy and Politics in Middle East"

<u>Tuesday 1st April</u>

3.30 - 4.00 p.m. Welcome Greeting

His Excellency Most Reverend Mons. Manuel Monteiro de Castro. Apostolic Nuncio to Spain and Andorra. Holy See.

His Excellency Most Reverend Mons. Fouad Twal. Coadjutor Archbishop. Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem.

His Excellency Mr. Samuel Hadas. Israeli Ambassador. International Cooperation Adviser to the Peres Center for Peace. First Ambassador of Israel in Spain and former Ambassador before the Holy See.

His Excellency Mr. Pedro López Aguirrebengoa. Spanish Ambassador. First Ambassador of Spain in the State of Israel.

Ms. Pilar Lara. President of the Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture (Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura). Spain.

4.00 - 4.45 p.m. Opening Lecture

His Excellency Most Reverend Mons. Fouad Twal. Coadjutor Archbishop. Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem.

His Excellency Mr. Pedro López Aguirrebengoa. Spanish Ambassador and formerly the first Ambassador of Spain in the State of Israel.

Presented by:

Prof. Dr. Joaquín Mantecón. Professor of State Ecclesiastical Law at the University of Cantabria. Former Deputy Director General of Religious Affairs at the Ministry of Justice.

4.45 - 6.30 p.m. 2nd Session. Wich is the peace message monotheist religions transmit?

Speakers:

His Excellency Most Reverend Mons. Elias Chacour. Archbishop of Galilee of the Melchite Greek Catholic Church. Israel.

Prof. Abdelaziz Aiadi. Member of the Council of Ulemas and Professor at the Abdelmalik Essaadi University in Tétouan. Morocco.

His Excellency Mr. Jacobo Israel Garzón. President of Federation of Jewish Communities in Spain.

Moderator:

Ms. Macarena Cotelo. President of the Euro-Arab Network of NGOs for Development and Integration (READI) and Director of Projects for the FPSC. Spain.

9.00 p.m. Dinner-colloquium

Speaker:

H. E. Mr. Jorge Dezcallar. Former Ambassador to the Holy See and Morocco and former Director of the CNI (Spanish Intelligence Centre), actual Secretary General of the Strategic International Council of Repsol YPF. Spain.

Wednesday 2nd April

9.30 - 11.00 a.m. 3rd Session. Religion: identity of people, resource utilitation of religious identity, war against religious totalitarianism

Speakers:

His Excellency Mr. Giuseppe Cassini. Ambassador of the Italian Republic. Former Political Adviser to the Italian Forces in UNIFIL.

Ms. Jumana Trad. Tribune and Seminars area of Casa Árabe-IEAM and member of the Executive Committee of the CEMOFPSC. Spain.

Mr. Gérard Khoury. Historian, author and journalist. Associate researcher at the *Institut de recherches et d'études sur le Monde Arabe et Musulman* (IREMAM). France.

Moderator:

Mr. Javier Martín. Arabic Service Director at the EFE Press Agency in Egypt.

11.00 a.m. Coffee break

11.30 a.m. - 1.00 p.m. 4ᵗʰ Session. Diplomacy and politics and the role of religion in reconciliation among peoples

<u>Speakers:</u>

His Excellency Mr. D. Musa Odeh. General Delegate of Palestine. Palestine National Authority.

His Excellency Mr. Samuel Hadas. Israeli Ambassador. International Cooperation Adviser to the Peres Center for Peace. First Ambassador of Israel in Spain and former Ambassador before the Holy See.

Her Excellency Ms. Paola Binetti. Senator of the Republic of Italy for the Democratic Party.

Prof. Nadim Shehadi. Associate Fellow, Middle East Programme, Chatham House and member of the Advisory Committee of the CEMOFPSC. United Kingdom.

<u>Moderator:</u>

His Excellency Mr. José María Ferré. Ambassador at large for the Relations with Foreing Islamic Communities and Organizations.

1.00 - 2.30 p.m. Wrap up and discussion: Speakers and Participants

Participant and moderator:

Her Excellency Ms. Ana María Menéndez. Diplomat. Former Ambassador on the Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York.

2.30 p.m. Reading of conclusions and cocktail party

X. Appendix III. List of participants

1. His Excellency Mr. Omar Azziman. Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco

2. His Excellency Mr. Yasser Morad Hossny. Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt

3. His Excellency Mr. Gustavo Suárez Pertierra. President of the Elcano Royal Institute (Real Instituto Elcano)

4. Her Excellency Ms. Rosario Martín Cabiedes. President of the Board of Directors of Europa Press

5. Ms. Alona Fisher-Kamm. Political Affairs Adviser to the Israeli Embassy

6. Ms. Giuliana de Papa. First Secretary of the Embassy of the Italian Republic

7. Mr. Assem Hanafy. Adviser to the Arab Republic of Egypt

8. Mr. Alberto Ucelay. Deputy Director General of Foreign Policy for the Middle East. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

9. Prof. Dr. Zoila Combalía. Professor of State Ecclesiastical Law. University of Zaragoza

10. Prof. Dr. Paloma Durán. Professor of the Faculty of Law, Complutense University of Madrid

11. Prof. Dr. Rafael Palomino. Professor of State Ecclesiastical Law. Complutense University of Madrid

12. Ms. Mónica Bohigues. Member of the Board of the FPSC

13. Mr. Antonio Hernández Deus. Director of Communication of the Opus Dei Prelature

14. Mr. Luis P. Tarín. Diplomat. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

15. Ms. Eugenia María Campos. Doctor of Ecclesiastical Law through the University of Navarre

16. Prof. Dr. Celia de Anca. Director of the Center for Diversity in Global Management of the Instituto de Empresa (Business School)

17. Mr. Jesús Pérez-Bilbao. Businessman

18. Ms. María Fernández. Journalist. AC Comunicación

19. Ms. Paz Pérez-Bilbao. Financial Consultant of AXA-Seguros e Inversiones

20. Ms. Malika Ben Mahi. President of AMPFR. Member of the Director Committee of the READI. Morocco

21. Mr. Ayoub Ben Ali. President of AID. Member of the Director Committee of the READI. Tunisia

22. Mr. Pablo Ivars Lleó. Journalist. La Gaceta de los Negocios. Digital edition

23. Ms. Teresa María Pérez-Payán. Member of the Board of the Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura

24. Mr. Juan Kindelán. Director. Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura

25. Mr. Félix Sánchez. Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura

26. Ms. Begoña Casas. Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura

27. Ms. Blanca de Mesa. Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura

28. Ms. Carmen Seoane. Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura

29. Ms. Carmen García. Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura

30. Mr. Jaime Armenteros. Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura

31. Ms. Encarnación del Amor. Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura

32. Ms. Lucía García. Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura

33. Ms. Irene Pérez. Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura

34. Ms. María González Pardo. Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura

35. Mr. Roberto Aguado. Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura

36. Ms. Marta Casasola. Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura

37. Mr. Antonio Arriero. Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura

38. Mr. Fernando Moreno. Secretary of the READI

CENTRE FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES
OF THE FOUNDATION FOR THE SOCIAL PROMOTION OF CULTURE
(CEMOFPSC)

(CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS DE ORIENTE MEDIO
DE LA FUNDACIÓN PROMOCIÓN SOCIAL DE LA CULTURA)
(CEMOFPSC)

www.fundacionfpsc.org

The Centre for Middle Eastern Studies of the Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture (CEMOFPSC, Centro de Estudios de Oriente Medio de la Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura) was created in 2006 to promote research into and analysis of matters relating to the Middle East (Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, Egypt and Jordan), and with intention of contributing to a better understanding of the different cultures and peoples and, therefore, to peacebuilding.

Its international nature and multidisciplinary approach aim to facilitate reflection, analysis and the exchange of opinions among intellectuals and experts from such diverse spheres as sociology, history, economics, communication, ethics, law, politics, cooperation for development, in order to help spread a better understanding of the constituent elements of the social reality of these countries, and to offer proposals which, from an apolitical, impartial and balanced perspective, favour the search for peaceful solutions that promote social and human development and focus on dialogue and reconciliation.

The people and institutions that form part of the CEMOFPSC or participate in its activities share a vision of society and the individual based on justice, on a profound respect for freedom of thought and on the desire to contribute to social progress, understanding among peoples, peace and the common good of mankind.

The CEMOFPSC's public activity commenced on 3rd February 2007 with the Inaugural Speech given by Nadim Shehadi, Associate Fellow in the Middle East Programme at Chatham House (United Kingdom) and Ana Menéndez, Spanish diplomat and former Ambassador on the Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York.

ORGANISATION

The CEMOFPSC is an institution sponsored by the Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture (FPSC, Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura). Its small and flexible structure corresponds to its multidisciplinary nature and its aims of promoting and spreading a better understanding of the constituent elements of the reality of the countries in the Middle East region.

This Centre for Middle Eastern Studies comprises an Advisory Committee, an Executive Committee and a group of Experts on Middle East issues.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

High Level consultative body made up of representatives of institutions and important personalities in the different work areas of the CEMOFPSC. Its mission is to advise the Executive Committee on how to define the CEMOFPSC's courses of action and how to execute specific actions.

- Nadim Shehadi
  Associate Fellow, Middle East Program, Chatham House, United Kingdom.
- Samuel Hadas
  Diplomat, Israel.
- Riad Malki
  Minister of Foreign Affairs of the PNA. Palestine.
- Youssef El Khalil
  Director of the Financial Operations Department of the Bank of Lebanon, President and founding member of the Association for the Development of Rural Capacities (ADR) and Professor at the American University of Beirut. Lebanon.
- Pedro López Aguirrebengoa
  Spanish Ambassador.
- Catholic University of America.
- American University of Beirut.
- Bethlehem University.
- Georgetown University.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

This body is directly responsible for defining and executing the CEMOFPSC's work programme.

> - Pilar Lara, President of the Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture (Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura, FPSC).
> - Macarena Cotelo, President of the Euro-Arab Network of NGOs for Development and Integration (Red Euro-Árabe de ONG para el Desarrollo y la Integración, READI), Director of Projects of the FPSC.
> - Jumana Trad, Member of the Advisory Committee of the FPSC, Tribune and Seminars area of Casa Árabe-IEAM and Honorary President of the READI.
> - Juan Kindelán, Director General of the FPSC.
> - Regina Gaya, Professor in Civil Law at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and Member of the Board of the FPSC.
> - Ana Menéndez, Diplomat.

OBJECTIVES

The CEMOFPSC's priority objective is to *"educate and inform"* experts, academics, communication media, politicians, development agents and civil society in general on matters relating to the Middle East.

The CEMOFPSC supports international postgraduate programmes in the field of social development, international cooperation, the political and social sciences, etc. and sponsors and promotes the education of young researchers and the specialization of academic experts.

The CEMOFPSC intends to establish a multidisciplinary Network of Experts on Middle East issues made up of Spanish and international organisations and personalities who share its vocation to "educate and inform". For this reason, it counts on the collaboration of universities, think tanks, organisations, experts, academics, communication media, politicians, development agents and other interested parties.

With the aim of encouraging an open and independent debate, the CEMOFPSC maintains the confidentiality of the reflections of its members, speakers and guests during the work sessions, seminars, conferences and meetings that it organises.

ACTIVITIES

In order to accomplish its objectives, the CEMOFPSC organises various types of activities:

- Expert meetings in the form of dinner-debates, round tables, work sessions, congresses, seminars and conferences. Specialists from various academic disciplines meet to discuss important issues relating to the Middle East.
- Postgraduate education: the CEMOFPSC supports international postgraduate programmes in the field of social development, international cooperation, the political and social sciences, etc. It also sponsors and promotes the education of young researchers and academic experts in their specialist fields.
- Alliances: the CEMOFPSC establishes alliances and partnerships with internationally renowned institutions and people in order to achieve common goals.
- Publications: the CEMOFPSC will particularly promote the publication and dissemination of the work carried out in its different spheres of activity. The publications will take the form of: work documents, expert articles, conclusions of the debates and expert work sessions.

The CEMOFPSC disseminates all this work through its web site. The content of both internal and external research projects and important texts can be consulted at www.fundacionfpsc.org.

The CEMOFPSC's activities will be open unless the speaker invokes the rule of confidentiality. If the speaker does not consider the rule sufficiently strict, the CEMOFPSC activity in question may be considered subject to the highest degree of confidentiality.

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Organisers: