**ITALY**



***MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION***

***inter-ministerial committee for human rights***

**Call for Inputs**

**Report on freedom of religion or belief and freedom from violence**

**and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity**

**ITALY’S CONTRIBUTION**

*January 13, 2023*

**Italy’s contribution**

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 *Further to your query, we are in a position to provide the following contribution,* ***for your information only.***

All individuals, in Italy, can profess their own religion (or no religion at all). All religious Denominations benefit of “equal liberty” of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of organization, freedom of worship.

The Italian Constitution guarantees the right to freedom of religion and worship.

From a constitutional standpoint, Article 3 stipulates the principle of equality and non-discrimination, including on the ground of religion; Article 8 also stipulates that “*all religious Denominations are equally free before the law*” and “*Their relations with the State are regulated by law, based on (bilateral) agreements (Intese), with their respective representatives*”; Article 19 further stipulates that “*anyone is entitled to freely profess his/her religious belief, both individually and collectively, to promote it, and also to celebrate religious rites in public or in private, provided they are not offensive to public morality*”; lastly, Article 20 forbids any special legal limitation or special fiscal burden at the expenses of religious associations and institutions with confessional aims.

In accordance with Article 8, since 2014 new *Intese* (agreements) have been signed with: the Italian Buddhism Institute - Soka Gakkai (in 2016); and, in August 2019, the Church of England.

More specifically, in light of its cultural and historical background, Italy has always recognized the need to protect and actively promote freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) both at home and abroad as a driver of peace, mutual understanding, inclusivity, and development.

We are also fully aware of the role that religious actors play not only in the spiritual domain but also in the broader social context.

Enhanced cooperation among representatives of different faiths can have positive spillover effects on FoRB protection as well as on the fight against hate speech and sectarian violence and on the promotion of other human rights, including freedom from violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Within its wider public diplomacy strategy, Italy is committed to further stepping up its engagement on freedom of religion or belief and interfaith dialogue by building new partnerships with all relevant players both domestically and internationally, including faith-based civil society organizations, and carrying out joint initiatives.

The protection and promotion of freedom of religion or belief should ultimately be rooted in the advancement of equality as a general principle.

In other words, advancing freedom of religious or belief also consists in removing all social, political, or legal obstacles to full equality of each person irrespective of his or her religious or belief affiliation. Any legal and social change towards more equality can more successfully gain ground if positive inputs come from religious and belief actors themselves, thus de-legitimizing any attempt to use religion or belief as a ground for discriminatory rules, policies or behaviors. This is also true for gender-based discrimination.

In Italy’s view, the protection of freedom of religion or belief and the promotion of interfaith cooperation are two mutually reinforcing objectives that should be pursued simultaneously. Governments can foster interreligious dialogue by providing platforms, creating opportunities and make the environment conducive to enhanced cooperation among representatives of different religious communities.

When religious representatives sit at the same table, carry out joint initiatives and publicly commit to working together, their respective faithful communities will be encouraged to do the same, thus improving mutual understanding and mitigating the risk of divisions and tensions. Against this background, as a way of example, is of important relevance the Italian NGO *Cammini di Speranza* (“*Paths of Hope*”, [www.camminidisperanza.org](http://www.camminidisperanza.org)) and the Christian volunteer association *La Tenda di Gionata* (“*Jonathan’s Tent*”, <https://www.gionata.org/tenda-di-gionata-english-news/>).

**Conclusion**

Italian Authorities take this opportunity to confirm their firm support and commitment to fully cooperating with UNSPMHs.