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Mednarodna znanstvena konferenca manjšine za jutrišnjo Evropo, nevladna organizacija s posvetovalnim statusom pri Svetu Evrope
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ISCOMET Network for Democracy, Human Rights and Protection of Persons belonging to Ethnic and Religious Minorities in South Eastern Europe

"Maribor Initiative" Project

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



In cooperation with:

Areopagus Center for Christian Studies and Contemporary Culture, and Euroregional Center for Democracy, Timisoara, Romania



REPORT

Democracy and Religion – The Romanian Experience

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

The Timis County Council Hall, TIMISOARA, Romania
31 May-1 June 2002

General Rapporteur: Silviu Rogobete, PhD

Under the Personal Auspices of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr. Walter Schwimmer

Main sponsors: EU, Timis County Council, Timisoara City Council

1. BACKGROUND	4
1.1. Briefing on ISCOMET and the “Maribor Initiative” Project	4
1.2. Concept of <i>Democracy and Religion- The Romanian Experience</i> Round Table	4
1.3. Host Organisations’ Details	6
1.3.1. ISCOMET, Slovenia	6
1.3.2. The Areopagus Center for Christian Studies and Contemporary Culture, Timisoara, Romania	7
1.3.3. The Euroregional Center for Democracy, Timisoara, Romania	7
1.4. Round Table Programme	9
1.5. Opening Messages	11
1.5.1. Message by Silvo Devetak, PhD	11
1.5.2. Message by His High Holiness Nicolae Corneanu, Metropolitan of Banat, Romanian Orthodox Church.....	13
1.5.3. Message by Mr Walter Schwimmer, Secretary General of the Council of Europe	13
1.5.4. Message by Erhard Bushek, the Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact in South Eastern Europe	14
1.5.5. Message of Mr. Alvaro Gil-Robles, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe.	15
1.5.6. Professor Gheorghe Ciuhandu, Mayor of Timisoara	16
1.5.7. Mr. Dan Ioan Sipos, President of the Timis County Council (representativ)	16
1.5.8. Message by His Excellency Mihai-Razvan Ungureanu, Special Envoy of the Stability Pact in South Eastern Europe.....	16
2. KEY NOTE SPEAKERS AND SESSIONS REPORTS	17
2.1. Religion and Society – Democracy, Human Rights, Religious Freedoms, Interdenominational Relations and the Role of Churches and Religious Communities in Social Work	17
2.1.1. Religion and Science: Two Opposing Realities?	17
2.1.2. Distorted Reality: An Example from the History of Science	17
2.1.3. Devastating Consequences: Modernity and Secularisation	17
2.1.4. Religion and Society: An Unintended Divorce.....	17
2.1.5. Report from Section 1 (Alex Neagoe)	17
2.2. Churches, Religious Communities and the State -Constitutional and Legal Issues, the Experience of the Governmental Agencies, the Protection of Religious Minorities.	19
2.2.1. Preliminaries	19
2.2.2. Discovering Pluralism as the Foundation of Civil Society	19
2.2.2.1. The Bright Side.....	19
2.2.2.2. The Dark Side	20
2.2.3. Churches’ Reaction to Social Change.....	20
2.2.3.1. The Temptation of Resting in the Past.....	20
2.2.3.2. The Responsibility of Adapting to Modernity	21
2.2.4. From the Totalitarian State to the Owner-State	21
2.2.4.1. The Persistence of ‘Orders and Control’ Reflex.....	21
2.2.4.2. The Servitudes of Freedom.....	21

2.2.5. Conceptual and Practical Evolutions in European Horizon	22
2.2.5.1. The Young Generation and the New Political Culture	22
2.2.5.2. The Deregulation of Religious Market and the Danger of Cults	22
2.2.6. Some Final Questions	23
2.2.7. Report from Section 2 (Robert Lazu).....	23
2.3. Religion and Freedom of Thought - Culture, Education and Mass-media	26
2.3.1. Setting the scene.....	26
2.3.2. The overall crisis of contemporary Romania	26
2.3.3. The new role religion has in late modern society.....	27
2.3.4. The return to the Judeo-Christian traditions.....	27
2.3.5. The reintegration of religion in universities	28
2.3.6. The level of Bible integration in our culture and what is to be expected from religion..	28
2.3.7. Report from Section 3 (Marius Radu).....	29
2.4. CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES' CONTRIBUTION to the	
Objectives of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe	30
2.4.1. The United Europe - a project in which the Church community is called upon to play a more dynamic role.	30
2.4.2. The Balkans - Preventive diplomacy in moral terms.	30
2.4.3. Stability Pact's vision of a multi-dimensional preventive diplomacy system.	30
2.4.4. Stability Pact's regional approach.	30
2.4.5. Stability Pact: a new vision of Church's insertion in SEE societies.....	30
2.4.6. The challenges ahead.	30
2.4.7. The policy of open doors.....	31
2.4.8. Report from Section 4 (Eugen Nagy).....	31
3. THE TIMIȘOARA DECLARATION ON THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES	
AND OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY	35
4. CONCLUDING REMARKS, WORDS OF THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ..	37
5. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS (ANNEX 1).....	38

1. Background

1.1. Briefing on ISCOMET and the “Maribor Initiative” Project

The ISCOMET Network has been established with the support of the European Union (the Royaumont Process). The Project was included by the EU Council decision of 22nd of October 1999 on the list of “priority projects relating to stability, good neighbourliness, and civil society in South East Europe”. On the basis of the experiences, which ISCOMET Network achieved through its activities in South East Europe since 1992, a second Project was initiated in the year 2000, called the “Maribor Initiative”. The Project is dedicated to the role of churches and religious communities in developing human rights, democracy and stability in South East Europe. The “Maribor Initiative” was supported by the participants of the Stability Pact Working Table I meeting in October 2000 in Bucharest, where also the representatives of the religious communities and organisations from the South East Europe and the European Union took active part.

The ISCOMET Network Project has been supported by the participants of the Stability Pact Working Table I meeting in October 2000 in Bucharest, where also the representatives of the religious communities and organisations from the South Eastern Europe and the European Union took active part. The Project's programme was confirmed also by the participants of the ISCOMET Network conference: “Democracy, Human Rights and the Rights of Ethnic and Religious Minorities in South Eastern Europe”, which was held in Bled, Slovenia, on 23 – 25 February 2001.

The main objective of the *Maribor Initiative* Project is to encourage the searching of ways and means of further reconciliation, respect of diversity, democracy, human rights and especially toward the promotion of religious freedoms and rights, protection of religious minorities, co-operation and stability in South East Europe.

Discussions on these topics, supplemented with specific questions and problems, will be held also in other South East European countries. On the Project's programme are also other activities concerning, for instance, co-operation of religious institutions related to up-bringing and education, encouragement of co-operation and activities aimed at protecting and renovation of cultural heritage of religious minorities, and co-operation of representatives of governmental agencies responsible for religious or cult issues.

The Project will be ended in December 2003, when the concluding conference will be convened. It will, among others, consider a synthesis of the result of the Project's activities, adopt a long-term oriented Document on the topics of the Project, and decide on the follow up activities.

The Project "Maribor Initiative" is being supervised by The International Honorary Council and co-ordinated by The International Programme Committee, which is supported by The International Committee of Advisers and by a great number of supporting organisations and institutions from the SEE and wider.

1.2. Concept of *Democracy and Religion- The Romanian Experience* Round Table

Background: The Round Table was organised within the ISCOMET Network for Democracy, Human Rights and Protection of Persons belonging to Ethnic and Religious Minorities in South East Europe. The event is the result of close co-operation between *ISCOMET* (Maribor), the

Areopagus Centre for Christian Studies and Contemporary Culture (Timișoara) and the *Euroregional Center for Democracy* (Timișoara).

Proposal: To organise a two-days Round Table to discuss the main issues related to the role of religious communities in promoting democratic values, reconciliation, respect for diversity, human rights, protection of minorities, co-operation and stability in Romania and in South Eastern Europe, and to submit a report to the EU Commission and to all the other relevant institutions.

The Round Table focused on the following four main areas:

- Religion and Society – Democracy, Human Rights, Religious Freedoms, Inter-religious Relations and the Role of Churches and Religious Communities in Social Issues
- Churches, Religious Communities and the State -Constitutional and Legal Issues, the Experience of the Governmental Agencies, the Protection of Religious Minorities.
- Religion and Freedom of Thought - Culture, Education and Mass-media
- The Contribution of Churches and Religious Communities to the Implementation of the Aims of the Stability Pact

Venue: The Timis County Council Hall, Timis County, Timisoara, Romania

Date: 31 May – 1 June 2002

Participants: Over 60 leaders and representatives of churches and religious communities from Romania, theologians of various Christian Churches (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Protestant and Evangelical), of Jewish and Muslim traditions, representative of NGO's, representatives of the Government and local authorities. See complete list attached (Annex 1).

Target client groups:

Policy makers and opinion leaders within various denominations across Romania and beyond;

Policy makers within local, governmental and EU authorities;

Those working with various religious groups within the NGO sector;

Those concerned about EU and the Stability Pact in South Eastern Europe policy.

Partners:

Romanian Orthodox Church

Romanian Roman Catholic Church

Romanian Greek Catholic Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church

Romanian Evangelical Alliance

Baptist Union of Romania

Reformed Church, Timisoara

Jewish Community of Timisoara

Muslim Community of Romania

Timisoara City Council

Timis County Council

Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe

Babes Bolyai University of Cluj

ISCOMET Maribor, Slovenia

Areopagus Center for Christian Studies and Contemporary Culture, Timisoara

Euroregional Center for Democracy, Timisoara

Final report: A Final Report has been produced and it is being largely circulated at national and international levels.

Steering Group:

Silvo Devetak, PhD, President of the International Programme Committee and Coordinator of the “Maribor Initiative”; Maribor, Slovenia

Silviu Rogobete, PhD, President of the Areopagus Center for Christian Studies and Contemporary Culture, Timisoara

Eugen Nagy, MA, Programme Coordinator, Euroregional Center for Democracy, Timisoara

Jasna Murgel, MA, Programme Coordinator, ISCOMET, Maribor, Slovenia

Jasmina Klojcnik, MA, Programme Coordinator, ISCOMET, Maribor, Slovenia

With the invaluable support of:

His High Holiness Nicolae Corneanu, Metropolitan of Banat, Romanian Orthodox Church,

Dan Sipos, Timis County Council President

Gheorghe Ciuhandu, PhD, Mayor of Timisoara

1.3. Host Organisations' Details

1.3.1. ISCOMET, Slovenia

ISCOMET, International Scientific Conference of Minorities for Europe of Tomorrow, is a Slovenian NGO enjoying consultative status with the Council of Europe. ISCOMET has established the Network for Democracy, Human Rights and Protection of People Belonging to Ethnic and religious Minorities. The Network was given the support of the European Union (the *Royaumont Process*). This Project was included by the EU Council decision of 22nd October 1999 on the list of “priority projects relating to stability, good neighbourliness, and civil society in South Eastern Europe”. On the basis of the experiences, which ISCOMET Network achieved through its activities in South Eastern Europe since 1992, a second Project was initiated in the year 2000, called the “Maribor Initiative”. This is dedicated to the role of Churches and Religious Communities in developing human rights, democracy and stability in South Eastern Europe. The “Maribor Initiative” was supported by the participants of the Stability Pact Working Table I, meeting in October 2000 in Bucharest, where also the representatives of the religious communities and organisations from the South Eastern Europe and the European Union took active part. It was added to the list of OSP within the Working Table 1 of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. The Project's programme was confirmed also by the participants of the ISCOMET Network conference: “Democracy, Human Rights and the Rights of Ethnic and Religious Minorities in South Eastern Europe”, which was held in Bled, Slovenia, on 23 – 25 February 2001. The main objective of the “Maribor Initiative” is therefore to encourage the searching of ways and means for further reconciliation, respect of diversity, democracy, human rights and especially for the promoting of religious freedoms and rights, the protection of religious minorities, co-operation and stability in South Eastern Europe.

Other events organised by ISCOMET include the one in Belgrade, 14th - 15th December 2001, bringing together for the first time in the recent history the representatives of all major religious communities of that area. Discussions on the topics mentioned above, supplemented with specific questions and problems, will be held also in other South Eastern European countries. The Project's programme also includes other activities like the co-operation of religious institutions

related to education, encouragement of co-operation and activities aimed at protecting and renovating the cultural heritage of religious minorities, and co-operation of representatives of governmental agencies responsible for religious or denominational issues. The Project is expected to end in December 2003, with a concluding conference that will aim at adopting a long-term oriented document, bringing together the results of the Project's activities, as well deciding on the follow up activities.

Contact Details:

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 Jasna Murgel, jasna.murgel@uni-mb.si
 Jasmina Klojcnik, jasmina.klojcnik@uni-mb.si

1.3.2. The Areopagus Center for Christian Studies and Contemporary Culture, Timisoara, Romania

The *Areopagus Center for Christian Studies and Contemporary Culture* is a new but dynamic non-governmental and non-profit organization seeking to address and to enhance the positive role of religious communities in the building of a new democratic environment in Romania and in South Eastern Europe. Areopagus is located in Timisoara and it was started in 1998 by a group of young Romanian scholars trained in the UK. The Centre functions across denominational boundaries, being highly appreciated by the various groups it serves.

Areopagus’ main overall objectives are:

- To assist individuals, churches and religious communities to have a distinct, informed and constructive voice in the process of democratic and moral reconstruction of the Romanian civil society, by organizing weekly interdenominational forums, periodical seminars, round tables, courses, cultural and theological studies.
- To assist disadvantaged groups to have access to fair social and economical integration, by offering free skills-training courses (ie., IT training centre), specialized therapy and advice, as well as support in the job-seeking process.

Contact details:

Areopagus, OP 16 CP 1170, Timisoara, 1900, Romania, tel. 00 40 256 194381

Silviu Rogobete, PhD, President Email: silviu@areopagus.ro	Fabiola Murariu, Social Department Coordinator Email: fabiola@areopagus.ro
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1.3.3. The Euroregional Center for Democracy, Timisoara, Romania

The Euroregional Center for Democracy (CED) is a non-governmental and non-profit organization, that promotes democracy and stability in Central and South - Eastern Europe. CED is located in Timisoara, Romania. Timisoara represents an ideal learning location for a laboratory seeking to devise programs of great importance for the future of democracy and regional stability. This multi-ethnic and multi-cultural space encourages the dialogue between individuals and institutions that promote democratic values. *Euroregional Center for Democracy* is a member of *Soros Open Network*, a network of Romanian independent organizations whose common aim is to promote the open society values.

Objectives

- **to build and consolidate democracy** by providing innovative ongoing and long-term opportunities for communication through interactive seminars, workshops, panels, in order to help democratic institutions
- **to promote partnership** between regional, national and local non-governmental organizations and institutions and help them develop regional projects, as well as undertake joint efforts
- **to strengthen the institutional capacity of the NGO community** through programs that ensure the development of available human resources, as well as of the organizational, institutional and legal framework in order to facilitate the elaboration of long-term strategies for viability and sustainability
- **to raise regional community awareness** of common transition-related issues and of the relationship between diversity and democracy by initiating debates on contentious issues in order to overcome prejudices, stereotypes and isolation.

Contact details:

Euroregional Center for Democracy

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Ilona Mihaies

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1.4. Round Table Programme

THE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE ROUND TABLE

Programme Committee

His High Holiness Nicolae Corneanu, PhD, Metropolitan of Banat, Romanian Orthodox Church – Chairman; Jasna Murgel, MA, Secretary; Teodor Baconsky, General Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bucharest; Rev. Alexandru Bálint, Reformed Church, Timisoara; Rev. Dr. David Ciucur, President of the Evangelical Alliance of Romania, Bucharest; Professor Gheorghe Ciuhandu, PhD, Mayor of the City of Timișoara; Rev. Prof. Wilhelm Dancă, Rector, Faculty of Roman-Catholic Theology, Iași; Prof. Silvo Devetak, PhD, President of the International Programme Committee and Coordinator of the “Maribor Initiative”; Rev. Kovács Zsombor, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Timișoara; His High Holiness Daniel Ciobotea, Metropolitan of Moldova and Bucovina; Prof. Andrei Marga, PhD, Rector of the Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj Napoca; Iona Mihăieș, Executive President of the Euroregional Center for Democracy, Timișoara; His High Holiness Lucian Mureșan, Archbishop and Metropolitan of Blaj, Greek Catholic Church; Rev. Prof. Paul Negruț, PhD, President of the Romanian Baptist Union; Chief Rabbi Dr. Ernst Neumann, Jewish Community, Timișoara; His Holiness Lukian Pantelić, Bishop, Serbian Orthodox Church, Timisoara; Silviu Rogobete, PhD, President of the *Areopagus* Foundation and Head of Department of Political Studies, West University of Timișoara; His Excellency Martin Roos, Bishop of Timișoara, Roman–Catholic Church; Mufti Barîș Şahinghian, Constanța Muftiat; Dan Ioan Şipoș, President of the Timiș County Council, Timișoara; His Excellency Mihai Răzvan Ungureanu, Regional Envoy of the Special Coordinator for the Stability Pact, Bucharest.

General Rapporteur: Silviu Rogobete, PhD

Rapporteurs: Robert Lazu, Marius Lazurca, MA, Eugen Nagy, Alex Neagoe, PhD, Marius Radu, MA

Organisation Committee: Eugen Nagy – President; Jasmina Klojčnik, Adelina Răsădea, Diana Tomi, Florin Zarcuła

PROGRAMME

Friday 31st of May, 2002

9.00 – 10.15

Opening of the Round Table:

Prof. Silvo Devetak, PhD, President of the International Programme Committee and Coordinator of the “Maribor Initiative” Project

His High Holiness Nicolae Corneanu, Metropolitan of Banat

Mr. Constantin Ostaficiuc, Vice-President of the Timiș County Council

Prof. Gheorghe Ciuhandu, PhD, Mayor of the City of Timișoara

Mihai Răzvan Ungureanu, Regional Envoy of the Special Coordinator for the Stability Pact

Personal Messages from:

Walter Schwimmer, Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Erhard Busek, PhD, Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact for South-East Europe

H.E. Alvaro Gil-Robles y Gil-Delgado, PhD, Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe

10:30 – 11:45

Religion and Society – Democracy, Human Rights, Religious Freedoms, Inter-religious Relations and the Role of Churches and Religious Communities in Social Issues

Key Note Speaker 1:

Horia-Roman Patapievici, PhD, Writer, National Council for the Study of the Archives of the Securitate

12.00 – 13.00 **Continuation of work**

13.00 – 15.00 **Lunch**

15.00 – 16.30

Churches, Religious Communities and the State -Constitutional and Legal Issues, the Experience of the Governmental Agencies, the Protection of Religious Minorities.

Key Note Speaker 2:

His Excellency Teodor Baconsky, General Director, Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, former Ambassador to Vatican

16.45 – 18.00 **Continuation of work**

Saturday 1st of June, 2002

9.00 – 10.15

Religion and Freedom of Thought - Culture, Education and Mass-media

Key Note Speaker 3:

Prof. Andrei Marga, PhD, Rector, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj Napoca

10.30 – 11.45 **Continuation of work**

12.00 – 13.00

The Contribution of Churches and Religious Communities to the Implementation of the Aims of the Stability Pact

Key Note Speaker 4

His Excellency Mihai Răzvan Ungureanu, Regional Envoy of the Special Coordinator for the Stability Pact

13.00 – 15.00 **Lunch**

15.00 – 16.30 **Continuation of work**

16.45 – 18.00

Concluding Debate and the Adoption of the Final Document

Chair

Prof. Silvo Devetak, PhD

His High Holiness Nicolae Corneanu, Metropolitan of Banat, Romanian Orthodox Church

His Holiness Lucian Mureşan, Archbishop and Metropolitan of Blaj, Greek Catholic Church

His Eminency Dr. Ernst Neumann, Chief Rabbi of the Jewish Community of Timișoara

Rev. Professor Wilhelm Dancă, PhD, Rector of the Faculty of Roman-Catholic Theology, Iași

Rev. Dr. David Ciucur, President of the Romanian Evangelical Alliance
Rev. Kovács Zsombor, Evangelic Lutheran Church, Timișoara
Rev. Alexandru Bálint, Reformed Church, Timisoara
Murat Iussuf, Counsellor, Constanța Muftiat
Rapporteur: Marius Lazurca, MA
Secretary: Adelina Răsădea

1.5. Opening Messages

1.5.1. Message by Silvo Devetak, PhD

Chairman of the International Programme Committee and the Co-ordinator of the Project “Maribor Initiative”

THE OPENING ADDRESS OF THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE ROUND TABLE

Eminences, excellences, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues and friends,

This Round Table is one of the activities of the project named “Maribor Initiative”. Why Maribor? It is the city in Slovenia where is the seat of the ISCOMET, an international NGO with the consultative status with the Council of Europe that initiated this Project. It is dedicated to discussing what could be the contribution of religious communities to reconciliation, respect of diversity, democracy, human rights, protection of minorities, co-operation and stability in South-Eastern Europe.

The basic objectives of the »Maribor Initiative« namely are:

- Contributing to reconciliation, tolerance, and co-operation between peoples;
- Spreading the culture of dialogue and of respect of diversity;
- Improving the civic education programmes and the religious teaching as well, aimed at spreading ideas and goals of the “Maribor Initiative”;
- Affirming respect of the principle of political, religious, cultural, and ethnic plurality;
- Affirming and implementing, both on macro and micro levels, the notion of multicultural and multi-religious society;
- Spreading the internationally accepted norms and provisions on religious liberties and rights;
- Enhancing the spreading of ideas and goals of the »Maribor Initiative« in religious mass media;
- Enlarging the knowledge of interested international political factors about the circumstances in the region concerning issues the »Maribor Initiative« relates to;
- Enlarging and strengthening the activities of the ISCOMET Network as an important civil society structure in the region.

In the framework of these basic objectives the »Maribor Initiative« has the following targets:

To elaborate ways and means for the effective contribution of religious communities and other relevant entities and organisations as well, to implementing the objectives of the Pact of Stability in SEE and of the »Maribor Initiative« as well, taking into account the specific circumstances in the particular social and political environment;

To elaborate ways and means for the factual improvement of the situation in the region as to issues which are covered by the »Maribor Initiative«, taking into account the traditionally and historic experiences of people living in the region;

To consider possible ways for promoting permanent dialogue and co-operation in the region and especially the dialogue between institutions and organisations of Churches and Religious communities;

To elaborate ways and means for spreading information on the international and especially European standards and experiences concerning issues which constitute the contents of the »Maribor Initiative«;

To contribute to the activities for the reconstruction, protection and preservation of historical and cultural heritage of religious minorities in the region as one of the basic elements of the multi-cultural and multi-religious society;

To elaborate ways and means especially on local level for improving democracy, the inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations, the protection of minorities and encourage co-operation between religious communities;

To elaborate ways and means for providing young people through educational systems with objective information on religions and cultures of "others" and especially of religious and ethnic minorities.

The Project "Maribor Initiative" is carried out in the framework of the ISCOMET Network for Democracy, Human Rights and Protection of Persons belonging to Ethnic and Religious Minorities in South Eastern Europe. It was established with the support of the Council of Ministers of the EU (Royaumont Process) and has been developing its activities within the frame of the Stability Pact for SEE. The ISCOMET Network has contributed in recent years substantially especially to the improvement of standards and policies regarding ethnic and religious minorities on the territory of former Yugoslavia.

The project "Maribor Initiative" has been initiated as a follow up of the ISCOMET activities in the field since 1994. In this year the meeting of representatives of all Churches and Religious communities from former Yugoslavia was convened. Its aim was to discuss ways and means to stop the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to begin a process of reconciliation and the renewal of life in the areas ravaged by war and destruction.

"Maribor Initiative" is carried out under the auspices of the International Honorary Council. The co-ordination of the Project is the responsibility of the International Programme Committee. It is supported by the International Committee of Advisers and by organisations and institutions and where it is necessary, by permanent and ad hoc local committees. The members of these bodies are out-standing personalities and experts from the SEE countries and from other parts of Europe as well.

The first round table "Contribution of Religious Communities to Reconciliation, Respect of Diversity, Democracy, Human Rights, Protection of Minorities, Co-operation and Stability in FR of Yugoslavia" was held on 13 -16 December, 2001 in Belgrade. It was the first time in the recent history of the country that the high representatives of all major Churches and Religious communities gathered in order to discuss the improvement of democracy and human rights and religious freedoms. Similar round tables and discussion in other SEE's countries will be convened in due course.

In addition, other activities aimed at the implementation of the Project's goals are envisaged for next years. As illustration I would mention the meeting of experts and representatives of educational institutions of all major Churches and Religious Communities in the SEE, the activities aimed at the reconstruction, renovation and preservation of the cultural heritage of religious minorities, and the seminar of representatives of governmental bodies responsible for religious or cult issues.

This phase of the Project will end with a Concluding Conference. It will consider the synthesis of the results of the Project's activities and the follow-up programme of the Project. It has been proposed that the conference should adopt a long-term oriented Declaration on the Role of Churches and Religious Communities in Strengthening Reconciliation, Respect of Diversity, Democracy, Human Rights, Protection of Minorities, Co-operation and Stability in South Eastern Europe.

Eminences, excellences, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues and friends,

It is not a mere chance that we gathered here in Timisoara. There are many reasons why was this city selected. This part of Europe is a meeting point of people of different cultures, religions and ethnic origin. They have been accustomed to live in peace and respect for each other. These experiences should be studied in order to find adequate solutions in those parts of the region and elsewhere in Europe that are rifted with ethnic and religious cleavages and materially and spiritually ravaged as a result of conflicts, wars and destruction. In addition, people of Timisoara had very soon understood and accepted the challenge of being the initiator of cross – border co – operation as an efficient tool for stabilizing and developing this part of Europe. This is why was this issue the main topic on the agenda of the 19th Conference Europe of Regions that was convened by ISCOMET and its European partners in September last year.

Eminences, excellences, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues and friends,

In concluding my statement I would like to wish to all of us fruitful, constructive and tolerant discussion. Let us have in mind that the results of our Round Table will be of great importance not only for the region but also for Europe as a whole.

Thank you for your patience.

1.5.2. Message by His High Holiness Nicolae Corneanu, Metropolitan of Banat, Romanian Orthodox Church

1.5.3. Message by Mr Walter Schwimmer, Secretary General of the Council of Europe

The “Maribor Initiative” launched a few years ago proved to be a most successful means for the restoration of dialogue across the borders of ethnicity and religion and to promote confidence amongst the populations of the South Eastern European region.

Inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogues permit our societies to find greater cohesion and reduce the risks of misunderstandings. The tragic events of 11 September 2001 have given that dialogue a new sense of urgency.

The present Round Table on “Democracy and Religion – the Romanian Experience” is another important contribution to reconciliation, respect of diversity and co-operation as the basic requirements for the consolidation of stability in South Eastern Europe.

I am pleased that you will, through your discussions, continue and reinforce the work of last year’s conference held here in Timisoara, on “Democratic Values of a Multicultural Society – Policies of the Civil Society” and its workshop “Religious Dialogue”. The conference, organised by the Euroregional Centre for Democracy, was part of the “Link Diversity” campaign sponsored by the Council of Europe in the framework of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

We had been convinced that “Link Diversity”, as an awareness-raising campaign in support of a multi-ethnic society and democratic citizenship, was important for stability in South-Eastern Europe. Today we know that in the coming years, linking diversity may be one of the political priorities for all our societies. Diversity and respect for the equal dignity of all should be protected by law. To improve the awareness of the *other* and mutual understanding needs constant dialogue.

The violence of the attacks of 11 September 2001, as well as the scale of the riposte, caused a terrible shock throughout the world. There have been hasty assimilations with religious or cultural differences.

I am, however, convinced that world affairs are not solely a question of juxtaposition of major cultural and religious entities. On the contrary, we know that diversity lies within these groups themselves and, therefore, the future lies in political projects which link this diversity both within and between these groups.

We have to think and to act together on a number of issues in the context of multiculturalism, including religious diversity. They include the role of the school system and the mass media, as well as questions such as freedom of religion, equality, respect for minority and majority cultures.

Finally, I should like to pay tribute to institutions such as ISCOMET, the Areopagus Centre for Christian Studies and Contemporary Culture, the Euroregional Center for Democracy and the European Centre for Ethnic, Regional and Sociological Studies of the University of Maribor, as the organisers of the present meeting. They act as a driving force and bring together the essential partners for dialogue together.

I am confident that the Romanian experience, and in particular the experience of the different cultural and religious communities living together here in Timisoara, will provide useful insight for our common work at the European level.

I am very pleased to grant my auspices to this important event and wish you a most successful Round Table meeting.



Walter SCHWIMMER

1.5.4. Message by Erhard Bushek, the Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact in South Eastern Europe

Brussels, May 28, 2002

On behalf of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe I warmly welcome the roundtable on “Democracy and Religion – The Romanian Experience”. The reconstruction of South Eastern Europe is not only a question of legislation, infrastructure, judicial reforms and fighting organized crime, but also of reconciliation and of European values. Religion and churches have a special obligation: sometimes they are misused politically, sometimes they are keeping out of the

processes of the society. Christians have the obligation to engage themselves especially under the conditions of the end of the communist era and the European integration. The modern world is asking for orientation, especially the younger generation.

So I wish you all the best for the conference which is in the sense of the Stability Pact and its Special Co-ordinator Erhard Busek.

Dr. Erhard Busek

1.5.5. Message of Mr. Alvaro Gil-Robles, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe.

Please allow me to begin by expressing my sincere regret at being unable to attend this important and interesting event. It is one of the great inconveniences of my current post that there is always more to do than can be done. I am glad, however, to be able to contribute, albeit in this small way, through these few words, to your discussions over the next few days.

The rights and responsibilities of religious communities have assumed a particular significance, one might even say popularity, over the last few months. This is not surprising. They have, however, been of longstanding concern and it is refreshing, therefore, to encounter such projects as the “Maribor Initiative”, whose activity owes nothing to the rise and fall of human rights fashions.

I cannot claim to be an expert on the situation in Romania, and whilst admiring initiatives that are sensible enough to limit their scope geographically, I will myself remain general in the comments I make.

It has always been my firm conviction that religious communities have, in addition to the primacy of their spiritual role, and in virtue of their strong moral voice and active social engagement, an important role to play in the promotion of democratic values and the respect for fundamental freedoms. In this context, the promotion of peace and mutual respect represent essential responsibilities. It is not that faiths must secularise their messages. An emphasis on the respect for the rights of others is not, indeed, incompatible with the spiritual and moral messages of all the main religions in Europe. Rights talk finds, indeed, in every case, a religiously motivated equivalent. It is a matter essentially, therefore, of reinforcing the positive, tolerant and charitable message inherent in all religions.

Religious communities have a strong cohesive role to play, not only through their preaching, but also, as I have no doubt will be examined in detail, through their actions. Religious communities

have always provided a raft of core social functions, ranging from education, to health care, counselling and a host of other activities. These activities have assumed, indeed, an increasing social significance throughout Europe – in the West, in virtue of increasingly shrinking public sectors and in the certain Eastern European countries as a result of economic, and occasionally political, difficulties reducing the capacity of the state to provide the services it used to until recently. These responsibilities have consequently brought Churches into ever-closer contact with the state.

It is a corollary of these responsibilities, however, that religious communities enjoy, in turn, in their relations with the State, the necessary rights for their free and open functioning. Apart from the freedom to practise and decide on the content of their faiths, important considerations arise relating to the registration of Churches and the nature of their subsequent legal personality – their entitlements and such fiscal or state benefits they might enjoy. There are many aspects to these questions and it is not for me to go into detail here.

It remains for me only, within the confines of such a message, to express once more my regrets at being unable to attend in person and express my conviction that such frank exchanges as can be expected over the next few days can contribute greatly to the advancement of a greater understanding and, most importantly, a fresh impetus to subjects we must all constantly be concerned to address.

Alvaro Gil-Robles, Commissioner for Human Rights

Strasbourg, 27th May 2002

1.5.6. Professor Gheorghe Ciuhandu, Mayor of Timisoara

1.5.7. Mr. Dan Ioan Sipos, President of the Timis County Council (representativ)

1.5.8. Message by His Excellency Mihai-Razvan Ungureanu, Special Envoy of the Stability Pact in South Eastern Europe

2. Key Note Speakers and Sessions Reports

2.1. Religion and Society – Democracy, Human Rights, Religious Freedoms, Interdenominational Relations and the Role of Churches and Religious Communities in Social Work

Horia-Roman Patapievici, writer, National Council for the Study of the Archives of the *Securitate*

2.1.1. Religion and Science: Two Opposing Realities?

2.1.2. Distorted Reality: An Example from the History of Science

2.1.3. Devastating Consequences: Modernity and Secularisation

2.1.4. Religion and Society: An Unintended Divorce

2.1.5. Report from Section 1 (Alex Neagoe)



Chair

His High Holiness Nicolae Corneanu, Metropolitan of Banat, Romanian Orthodox Church

His Holiness Alexandru Messian, Bishop of Lugoj, Greek Catholic Church

His Excellency Martin Roos, Bishop of Timișoara, Roman-Catholic Church

Rev. Branislav Stankovic, PhD, Serbian Orthodox Church, Timișoara

Dănuț Mănăstireanu, World Vision Romania

Key Note Speaker 1:

Horia-Roman Patapievici, PhD, Writer, National Council for the Study of the Archives of the *Securitate*

Rapporteur: Alex Neagoe, PhD

Secretary: Vasile Gherheș

The first session of the Round Table has started with the presentation made by Mr. Horia-Roman Patapievici, which began with a short history of the development of physics, particularly of the relationship between science and religion, and has continued with a discussion regarding the relationship between religion and society. In the first part it has been emphasized the fact that the most spread perception today is that physics has started to develop from the time of Galileo Galilee.

From Archimedes to Galilee- it is often said- nothing important has happened in the area of science. The explanation offered, as an unchallenged rule, was that in the Middle Age science did not have the necessary *space* to develop, being under the power of the church. The religious rules stood on the way of scientific progress. The real discoveries became possible only in the Renaissance period.

In spite of the wide spread of this interpretation of the history of physics, the existence of authors like Pierre Duhem (1861-1916), must be signaled out. They have clearly shown the existence of amazing progress in physics during the Middle Age. All these discoveries have been (and still are, on a large scale) put under silence by the modernist propaganda, which promoted a clear cut separation between science and religion, also attempting to indoctrinate the population with the idea that religion is the major obstacle for the progress of science and society.

The problem we are confronting with, as a result of this distorted truth, is not just one related to the integrity of the knowledge of history. By separating rationalist sciences from human sciences and religion, a dichotomy between the “spirit of geometry” and the “spirit of finesse” started to appear. The unfortunate result was that exact sciences started to be seen as “cold” thus losing their attraction.

In conclusion, as a result of the study of the real history of scientific knowledge in physics, it can be said that religion does not have to be seen as an enemy of science and progress, but rather as their essential partner.

Bringing to light the developments in the Middle Age physics has been compared by the other participants at the Round Table with the re-discovering of a new continent (T. Baconscy). All participants agreed that religion is not only capable to tolerate scientific realities, but also to support them (T. Baconscy) (without meaning that religion should be seen as the only premises for scientific progress - H.R. Patapievici).

From the area of science the discussion moved to social work (Danut Manastireanu). In this domain, the importance of the religious element had an important role. Beginning with the teaching and the practice of the first church, continuing with the patriarchs’ period, the middle age period, the time of the protestant reformation and the evangelic movement, the church and religious institutions have always been involved in offering help to those in need (in fact, the practice of social work has started from such premises) and in a positive transformation of society.

Experience seems to prove that the role of churches and religious institutions in the societal transformation has a special value, especially when the state’s institutions are separated from the religious ones. Of course, it is not a cultural or social separation, but an institutional one. Only in these terms religious people, and specially their leaders, can benefit of a constructive critical space in relation to the state’s institutions.

Besides the messages of those who contributed in this first session, the aspect that also gave a special significance was the variety of the participants who spoke during this time. In this way, it was possible for all the representatives of the three monotheistic religions (Judaic, Christian and Muslim) to have constructive dialogue, repeatedly mentioning that the goal is not just a spirit of tolerance, but one of love and authentic human approach (Chief Rabbi, Dr. Ernst Neumann). The Koran, Torah and the Bible promote without reservation the message of unity and love. The mistakes appear when the message of these books is being politicized and it is used for the benefit of extremist groups (Muftiu Baris Sahinghian).

In these discussions, a special significance has been given to the “Timisoara model” (and of Banat region) - a model worth to be followed, concerning the relationship between various ethnic and religious groups. From major and well-known realities (as the redistribution of the Greek - Catholic churches or the peaceful cohabitation of a large number of ethnic groups and religious cults) to details less observable (as the photos from the lobby of the Timisoara Council, with Hungarian inscriptions), the spirit of good relationships within this part of Romania is being felt. (Lehel Leszai).

It was also signaled out the fact that, in a context where, unfortunately, the most obvious power in our society is terror, events such as this round table have a crucial role in the diminution of potential social tensions. (Chief Rabbi Dr. Ernst Neumann).

2.2. Churches, Religious Communities and the State -Constitutional and Legal Issues, the Experience of the Governmental Agencies, the Protection of Religious Minorities.

His Excellency Teodor Baconsky, General Director, Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs



“Democracy and Religion. The Romanian Experience”
(Timisoara, May 31st – June 1st 2002) (*an abstract*)

2.2.1. Preliminaries

There is an ongoing debate on whether the Romanian society still passes through a period of transition. The answer depends, of course, on the meaning of this concept. If by “transition” we mean the introduction of a minimal democracy, this process has ended. If “transition” refers to achieving a real democracy we can say that we are almost half way through. The psychological resonance of such a debate is convincing itself. Some declare “the end of transition” due to some irrational reasons like the fear of going back to dictatorship or because they want to get rid of the frustrations of the last decade. Some others wish that the transition continued because they do not have the assurance that the new social arrangement can offer the warranties and the satisfactions that they expect. From one point of view, “the end of transition” remains a priority for the Romanian citizens. People are expecting that after the communist inferno and the “purgatory” of transition, to get to the “paradise” of a functional and democratic capitalism. Nevertheless, the tentative of the ex-president Emil Constantinescu, of declaring that Romania there is in a period of “post-transition” was not very popular. My personal opinion is that the transition will end only when Romania will be accepted in NATO and the European Union. We have to work for the carrying out this external agenda if we want that the ambiguities of the post-communism period to allow room for a realistic and effective social project.

2.2.2. Discovering Pluralism as the Foundation of Civil Society

2.2.2.1. The Bright Side

Although they say that the Romanian society has not developed, it has experienced a significant recovering and constructive development. It is obvious that every social group can accept and interpret the change according to the limits of a certain level of tolerance. In many cases, this level was very low. But The quantifiable total of the mentality and behaviour changes still remains huge. The society that had only two “collective actors” – the communist nomenclature and the masses – turned into a complex socio-cultural structure. No matter our education level or our material standard or our position, we already accept the fact that we do not think alike, we do not vote for the same party, we do not read the same newspapers and we do not believe – if so – in a unique religious doctrine. We have discovered our neighbours who belong to a different ethnical group are respectable citizens and the free press has had magnificent role in helping us discover the existence of some minorities that were ignored before. Because the historiographical aspect requires challenging hermeneutics diversity, the image of our past has gradually lost its mythical connotation. Thousands of Romanians have travelled, have studied and have worked abroad, getting to know directly other cultures, traditions and forms of institutional structures.

Despite of an uncertainty that encourages piracy and improvisation, the new generations adapted to the information technology. Also the regional identities have been valued with a pride that does not seem to endanger at least for the moment, the cohesion of the national state. Despite of so many sabotages and approximations the free market economy vocabulary has become common. All these elements – excerpted from a longer list – illustrate the viable experience of pluralism as basis for the civil society.

2.2.2.2. The Dark Side

The evolutions mentioned above represent the expression of personal initiatives and refer to what the international relations theoreticians call soft power. If I purchase a PC, if I found a cultural organization, if I work as a voluntary, if I am an active member of my church or I receive a scholarship in a western university, I contribute not only to my own education in the spirit of the democracy and modernity, but also to the social progress of my own community. A lot of citizens, especially young people, have fructified their freedom of expression for verifying the force of such ideas and experiences. In other words, their creativity, intellectual instruments and abilities have been used very much at the individual and micro-social level. Unfortunately, all this symbolical force did not influence the government politics. After the totalitarian trauma, the civil society recovered in parallel with the institutional reality of the state and often against it. The individual and the community, the private and the public, the local and the national are still competitive forces that do not manage to cooperate for the common good. Stimulated by a suspicion culture, this break explains – together with the stagnation of the gross national product – the variety of “collateral damages” of transition. 40% of the active Romanians are poor peasants who work in agriculture for surviving. The use or retiring as an artificial instrument for solving the work conflicts has contributed to the increasing of a vulnerable social group that is passive and resentful. The economical emigration has consolidated our negative performance regarding the doctors and the teachers. The discontinuity of the reform of national education has encouraged the school abandon, and the subsidizing of the national health system has aggravated the crisis of the hospital infrastructure diminishing the quality of the medical services. The chaotic decentralizing and the lack of budget for the fundamental research institutions have not been compensated by the adoption of laws that could support their alternative modernization. The long term unemployment, the juvenile crime, the demographic decline, the expanding of extreme poverty, corruption, the unjust distribution of the resources, the expanding of the underground economy, social polarization, the political subordinating of justice or the frailty of a bank system exposed to unpunished frauds are only “the main titles” of an assessment that no form of triumphalism can ever hide.

2.2.3. Churches' Reaction to Social Change

2.2.3.1. The Temptation of Resting in the Past

How did the Romanian churches react towards the new social, political, economical and cultural context? I believe that within the ecclesiastical structures the symbolical conflict between reformers and conservatives began unofficially, but quite violently. There is a tension amplified by the conflict between generations. The churches have perceived communism as being the “Babylonian Captivity” and thought that the year 1989 will not bring any challenges or tests but it will be the returning to the “Promised Land”. For them, the returning from exile was perceived as the magical restoration of the pre-communist past. On their agenda an important part was the complete restitution of the religious property that had been confiscated, the involvement of the church in the public life, the consubstantiality between the religious doctrine and the dominant state ideology, the ethnical refuse of modernism, the mass repudiation of the city elites, the idealization of the civilizing role of the anti-Ottoman resistance, and the perception of the critics

towards the church structures as being an attack against the Church. The promoters of this program saved, maybe, a series of traditional values, but isolated the Churches from the emergent civil society. They rushed into signing a new pact with the state, from which they are expecting financial assistance, unconditionally supporting it and legitimising it, imagining that in doing so they are honouring the theological-political heritage of the Byzantine Empire. Their only difficulty comes from the fact that the Empire disappeared five centuries ago, and also Romania is not a monarchy anymore, where one could apply nostalgias of neo-byzantine scenarios.

2.2.3.2. The Responsibility of Adapting to Modernity

The reformers among which we can include the younger intellectual Christians, the bishops appointed after 1989, theology professors and others who carried on the responsibility of adapting to modernity opposed to the conservators. They did not take control, they are not united and have not founded a formal agenda, but their contribution is crucial. Open to ecumenism and often trained in the West, the reformers had, up until now at least, the merit of formulating new thematics and priorities. From their perspective, the Church should separate itself from the state, with all the implications of that fact. They plea for the urgency of adopting a social doctrine that would allow lay people a correct orientation in political life, in bioethics, in sexuality, ecology or market economy. They require internal and external interdenominational cooperation on charitable works, a closer relationship of ecclesial authorities with civil society, the monitoring of human rights, churches' implication on building democratic institutions and the articulation of an efficient lobby for preserving Christian traditions within Europe.

I ought to mention that the two camps I described above do not represent static closed categories, but rather mobile mental configurations, projects with a variable geometry, permeable spiritual statuses. I consider that antagonizing the two categories would be a disaster for the pastoral credibility of churches and this can not be avoided other than by following a lucid compromise.

2.2.4. From the Totalitarian State to the Owner-State

2.2.4.1. The Persistence of 'Orders and Control' Reflex

In communism the Church was supervised by the Department of National Security and the Department of Denominations. Their purpose was the censoring and the external mystification of the realities of the communist camp, the punishment of dissidents, the nationalist manipulations of the sacred symbols and also the elimination of religion from social life. The only spaces that were not controlled by this strict system were the prisons and the communities from Exile. Although much expected, the miracle of the spontaneous disappearance of the communist heritage did not happen. It is enough to interpret the metamorphosis through which the Department of Denominations (Cults) has passed since 1989, to realise the volitive inertia of the state in subordinating ecclesial life. For twelve years, no one single government tried to realise the anachronism of such a structure. No one seem to have realised that religious freedoms – part of the fundamental human rights – are necessarily and sufficiently guaranteed through the Constitution. An evolution however, did take place. The state is not into the business of inserting ideological commands. It is only offering its financial support for the price of total fidelity politically colloured.

2.2.4.2. The Servitudes of Freedom

Unlike other Churches – which have the headquarters outside our country – the Romanian Orthodox Church does not want to separate from the state yet, as the status that they have negotiated is the most convenient one. The Orthodox clergy considers that it attained the optimal

positioning in terms of costs and benefits, as soon as it accommodated itself to the paradox according to which its lack of involvement in politics has as its corollary the legitimisation of any government. It would be normal that the separation to be prepared by a new legal framework, but the Parliament was never asked to do that. Firstly because, on the one hand, the Church does not want to take on board the task of administrating, conservating and restoring its own property. On the other, the Church is too convinced that the traditional alliance with the state remains the most secure model of diminishing, with profane methods, the pressures of interdenominational competition.

2.2.5. Conceptual and Practical Evolutions in European Horizon

2.2.5.1. The Young Generation and the New Political Culture

The leaders of all denominations – especially if they have been appointed after 1989 – realize that the younger politicians – who are in their 50s – will soon impose a more sophisticated political culture. An important issue is the improving of the quality of Romanian democracy by the assimilation of *acquis communautaire*. Globalisation is an issue – and more than that, a reality – which is carefully studied not only by annalists, but also by people involved in economy. Finally, our acceptance in the Atlantic community will diminish our ancestral feeling of regional insecurity, of course requiring that we will fully assimilate democratic values. All these processes will influence The Law for Denominations (Legea Cultelor) – that will probably be drafted in the current legislation – and the public behaviour of the Churches. Evidently, the new relationships between various denominations, the relationship between churches, state and civil society, will be stabilised only in the next decade. It is hard to believe though, that the direction of these future relations will be significantly altered. People's prosperity depends on the success of our integration within the Euro zone and within the security zone guaranteed by NATO. I believe that Romanians want to get read of poverty and I also believe that the frenzy of this objective will help them to accept changes, including in the religious sphere. Within the new circumstances, politicians will slowly abandon their preferential treatment of the Orthodox Church. Personally, I believe that the separation of the church from the state is imminent and I also believe that it is in the interest of the Orthodox Church has an interest in anticipating this evolution, so that it would be able to pertinently negotiate its compensations and guaranties.

2.2.5.2. The Deregulation of Religious Market and the Danger of Cults

Regardless of how many hopes we put on democracy, it is a fact that it can become a shield behind which the most corrosive and aggressive sects can flourish. Since respect for individual rights and protection of minorities come from the logics of the democratic process, traditional churches – beginning with the Orthodox – have the possibility to ask the state to limit and to forbid all radical religious movements. Not because they are recent, or heterodox, or foreign, but because their existence is a danger for the material security and for the mental well-being of some of their members who can become adversaries of law order. The reformulation of the juridical system destined to the functioning of the various religious communities generated great difficulties and hypocrisies in the majority of the former communist states. The Russian Federation managed the *performance* of legitimising Buddhism and outlawing the Catholic Church as non-traditional Church. In order to avoid the arbitrariness of some partisan approaches in Legal travesty, the Romania Law of Denominations (Legea Cultelor) will be obliged to define without hesitation terms such as 'recognition', 'proselitism', 'mission, religious association, congregation, cult, Church.

2.2.6. Some Final Questions

After now more than two decades, the Romanian young people will be absorbed in the polycentric, relativist and non-hierarchical world of the Internet. Education, curricular selection, the literary and the historical and graphical canons, namely all the paradigms of the national state will undergo structural changes and adjustments followed by changes in the collective memory and the mass cultural practices. When the ambiguities of the Third Way increase the danger of extremism, the right and the left democracy will go back to their original values that are meant to protect freedom and equality. It would be normal that the religious communities from Romania would anticipate and would treat wisely such evolutions. On the virtue that the proportions between the Orthodox majority and the other denominational minorities were preserved, Romania has never been through inter-denominational wars. This advantage will not protect us, though, from the new challenges brought to us by some mutations that will require the harmonisation between religious identity, civic responsibility, the reality of the European Union and globalisation. Will the protagonists have enough good will and expertise to adapt to such changes to correct their potential deviations? Will we find within our internal inter-denominational cooperation an instrument for increasing social cohesion and maturing constitutional patriotism? Will ecumenical dialogue continue to function as an ethic of a multicultural Europe, and as much as possible, faithful to its Christian roots? Will the Romania state be a real partner of Churches and will they be able to obtain a balance between autonomy and loyalty? Will the lay people of all denominations be given its real role that an anachronic clergy refuses to give? These are just a few questions that our Round Table would hopefully bring closer to an answer.

2.2.7. Report from Section 2 (Robert Lazu)

Chair

His High Holiness Lucian Mureşan, Archbishop and Metropolitan of Blaj, Greek Catholic Church
Rev. Prof. Dragoş Bahrim, Director, Theological Seminary Iaşi, personal representative of His High Holiness Daniel Ciobotea, Metropolitan of Moldova, Romanian Orthodox Church
Murat Iussuf, Cult Counsellor, Muftiat Constanţa
Rev. Alexandru Bálint, Reformed Church, Timisoara
Rev. Petru Bulica, Pastor, Betel Baptist Church, Timişoara

Key Note Speaker 2:

His Excellency Teodor Baconsky, General Director, Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, former Ambassador to Vatican

Rapporteur: Robert Lazu

Secretary: Vasile Gherheş

The first intervention belonged to His Holiness Alexandru Mesian, the Greek-Catholic bishop of Lugoj. After presenting his appreciation to the organisers, he greeted the audience in name of His Highness Lucian Muresan, apologising for his absence from the conference in Timisoara. Coming back to the subject, the relationship between different cults in Romania, His Highness referred to the happiness of the Greek-Catholic church, of regaining its freedom after 50 years of interdiction. He has also referred to the problems and tensions from the last years, especially those regarding the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the Greek-Catholic church united with Rome.

Father Dragoş Bahrim, the representative of the bishop of Moldova, His Holiness Dr. Daniel Ciobotea, has presented the greetings of the Orthodox bishop, after which he has referred to Mr. Baconsky speech, emphasising the importance of the subject regarding the relationship between Church and State. Besides the political and law aspects of the problem, Mr. Bahrim has emphasised the importance of the church's visions regarding man, a vision of an evangelic and theological nature about the relationships between man and God. Referring to man as an icon of the Holy Trinity, but also to a key-notion of the theological anthropology – the concept of

“person”, Fr. Bahrim reminded the audience that , from a Christian perspective, humanity is of the highest value. In the end of his exposition, Fr. Bahrim has shown the firm desire of the Orthodox Church of participating, in the limits of its specific competence, to a democratic society, by an engagement of the cults in a constructive dialogue. At the same time he has underlined that the term “tolerance” is not an evangelic one and “love” should replace it. In this respect, of the participation of all Churches and Religious Communities to a democratic society, there must be a common front of action. In a Romanian context, The Law for Religious Affaires (Legea Cultelor) is of a great importance, which has to settle the background in which the dialogue between different cults will take place.

Mr. Bahrim said “ Romania must make efforts for a closer relationship between the churches”, quoting Mr. Gerhard Roberts who declared that “the European Union must pay respect to identity of the religious communities”. What comes out of this affirmation, Mr Bahrim reveals, is “ the right of auto determination” of churches and religious communities; the state must respect the religious freedom and identity. Mr. Bahrim ended his speech emphasising the fact that Romania is asked to militate for the approach between State and Churches.

Mr. Murat Iusuf, the representative of the Islamic Community of Romania (Constanta), has brought again in discussion the difficult problem of the relationships between state and religion, requiring solid reflections over the two well-known models: the modern model, based on separation of church from state, and the theocratic model, in which the state was subordinated to religion. A speech of Mr. Murat Iusuf, regarding the relationship between religion and state followed. At the same time, Mr. Iusuf, has explained the position of the Islamic church with the state, underlined that Islam- which ethnologic means “peace”- it is not a religion of hatred and violence, which generates terrorism, but a religion of the relationships between man and God. The cardinal question, which ended Mr. Iusuf’s commentary, has referred to the need of reflection over the advantages and disadvantages of the separation between state and church.

Reverend Petru Bulica, representative of the Baptist Community of Timisoara, has firstly referred to Mr. Horia-Roman Patapievici’s speech, from which a negative effect of the separation between state and church, between the secular life and religious life, has been revealed. In Rev. Bulica’s opinion, Martin Luther has been one of those who tried to re-introduce the profane life in the sphere of sacred, insisting on the inter-dependence between “vita activa” and “vita contemplativa”, the two aspects of worship. Following this line, Rev. Bulica has emphasised that it is a serious problem when the church becomes an instrument of oppression by involving itself excessively in the political life. Another serious phenomenon is that of separation of church from the social life, being excessively preoccupied of the sacred. The best way, it is middle one, in which the religious life concentrates on its specific problems, but also on the social, political and economic problems.

Mentioning “Timisoara model”, Mr. Bulica has revealed that here the ill-fated identification of unity with uniformity was surpassed, obtaining a “unity in diversification”. Regarding the dialogue between religious cults, its motivations can be insufficient (for example, the integration in European Union), or sufficient (for example the love for people and the desire of self-enrichment). As concerns the relation between state and church, in Mr. Bulica’s opinion, the central question would be this: “ How can the church be loyal to the state and apply in the same time the principle of separation between state and church?” The “symphony” model between church and state is not functional anymore. In these circumstances a balanced model must be found, which can be discovered in the Holy Bible.

Father Wilhelm Danca, Rector of the Roman Catholic theological Institute from Iasi spoke, revealing that the problem between church and state is, first of all, a problem of education.

Father Stelian Tofana, appreciated the challenging reports of Mr. Horia-Roman Patapievici and Teodor Baconsky, emphasising that during the third century of Christianity those who are able to challenge will face the problems in theological area, but not only. Father Tofana, said that the dialogue between cults, does not have a long history. Then he has asked Mr. Horia-

Roman Patapievici where can be placed the role of religion in the context of polemics between modernity and post-modernity. As one can talk about a religion of science, as well one must talk about a science of religion. As concerns the integration of Romania in N.A.T.O., this would be just one step, a beginning in the process of European Integration. From this perspective transition should be seen as a continue process. The church must, necessarily, be taken into account; otherwise integration is not possible. Asking himself about the challenge made by the separation between state and church, Professor Tofana, thought that none of the solutions is good enough. Anyway, if the complete separation will take place, there is a risk that instead of collaboration to promote anarchy. In the end of his speech, Father Tofana said that the church must involve itself in the political life and the separation between state and church should not take place.

Emphasising the interest of the “Timisoara model”, Dr. David Ciucur, the president of the Romanian Evangelical Alliance, asked what does this model mean: redistribution of the goods belonging to the Greek-Catholic church, common actions and relationships between different cults and etc. He has seen this model as an isolated case, because in other areas of Romania have been, repeatedly signalled conflicts between different cults.

Mr. Ciucur insisted upon the importance of the churches’ vision in the relationships with the state, stressing the value of all religious communities and churches’ capacity of accepting critics and assuming responsibility for their mistakes.

Making comments from a critical perspective, Mr. Marius Cosmeanu has repeated the problem of tensioned relationships between the Orthodox Church and Catholic Church, pointing out that the Orthodox church has manifested itself, paradoxical, as a national church with a sect behaviour.

Mr. Teodor Bacovsky has intervened answering and bringing new fertile clarifications concerning the visit of the Pope John Paul the Second in Romania.

Father Iustin Marchis emphasised that one of the things of great importance is that not to react as the model in nowadays indicates.

Mr. Viorel Dima has pointed out the followings:

1. The Romanian Constitution does not specify a well-defined model of the relationships between State and Church.
2. The Law of Cults is preceded by the existence of certain settlements.
3. Are there any chances for the Law of Cults to be discussed during the present governing?

The critic expressed by Mr. Viorel Dima, revealed the non-existence of a unite vision, on the whole, which must exist at the base of any settlement concerning the religious life in Romania, in this matter the circumstantial ideas are not the best solutions. How the Law of Cults will look like, Mr. Viorel Dima asked himself in the end of his intervention.

Mr. Bacovsky’s conclusion “Not a law will stop the conflicts between cults, but an authentic culture of dialogue”- has been appreciated by all participants at the round table.

The last intervention of the second session of the round table ‘Democracy and religion’, the “Timisoara model” belonged to Mr. Ion Traian Stefan, the representative of the newspaper “Romania libera”. In contrast with the previous messages, Mr. Stefan said that from some points of view, transition in Romania has come to an end. Concerning the relationship between democracy and religion, it has double meaning. Religion influences democracy; in what way does democracy influence religion? Mr. Stefan said that it should not be found, by different communities and churches, ways of flirting with the state, but should be taken into account the democratic values as they are. Democracy helps for a profound reformation; therefore it should be discussed in conformity with its personal values.

2.3. Religion and Freedom of Thought - Culture, Education and Mass-media

Prof. Andrei Marga, PhD, Rector, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj Napoc, Former Minister of Education

Andrei Marga

Vice-Chancellor of "Babeş-Bolyai" University

Former Minister of Education

Modernity, religion, culture (an outline)



Contribution to the round table Democracy and Religion – The Romanian Experience,

Organized by ISCOMET Network, Timisoara, May 31 – June 1, 2002

2.3.1. Setting the scene

The theme of the round table we attend, **Democracy and Religion – The Romanian Experience**, brings forward religion's involvement in the democratic processes in Central and Eastern Europe, a fact that must be appreciated from the very beginning. It is easy to observe that the democratic process in this part of Europe, after 1989, progressed where **the spiritual resources for democracy** were larger. On the other hand, as the successful democratic structures of modern world demonstrate, democracy can function only if the citizens learn the rules and, even more, live by them with **a special motivation, resulted from a specific perception of life's meaning**. Finally, the democratic experiences following the 2nd World War proved that democracy is not compatible with any **cognitive attitude**, and **the political capacity**, required by reforms, cannot be reached without vast and conscious cultural revisions in those societies¹. Based on all those arguments – and on other arguments, of course – it is proper to place the theme **Democracy and Religion** not only on the field of democratization efforts in the European area we live in – concerning human rights, minorities protection, respect for diversity, interdenominational relations, the existence of legislative premises, vital aspects today. It is beneficial to place this theme in the evolution of modern society, which leads us to a better understanding of democracy and religion and their mutual involvement.

As the expression **Romanian Experience** denotes, from the title that the organizers gave to this round table, the intention of the present reunion is to explore the recent experience of our country. In order to avoid repeating what each of the participants has in mind, most certainly, when talking about local experience, allow me to take as a starting point of my contribution a brief assessment of **today's problems in Romania** (1), in order to approach later **the new role that religion has in the late modern society** (2), **the return to Judeo-Christian traditions** (3), **the change of the world following September 11, 2001** (4), **the reintegration of religion in universities** (5) and to close with a reference to **the level of Bible integration** in our culture and to what is to be expected from religion (6).

2.3.2. The overall crisis of contemporary Romania

My thesis is that – as can be seen from the insufficient attempts to approach in adequate terms and to overcome the crisis – in fact the Romanian society is going through a large scale crisis, constituted by an economic crisis; a crisis in administration; a political and cultural crisis; and a motivational crisis. Having this crisis as a background, after 1989, following the fall of the intellectual authority of Marxism and without any elaborate alternative, in Romania religion regained a vast field, which was lost during 1945-48 and in the following

years, because of the repressions and interdictions typical for communism and the oriental-socialist form it took here. People felt free to express their beliefs. Churches understood the consequences of freedom of conscience, and religious education returned into the school system. **Religion today, and the institutions that represent it, have a new role in the Romanian society and therefore any analysis of its organization and evolution must take them into account.**

2.3.3. The new role religion has in late modern society

The new impact of religion and religious institutions in Romania after 1989 is not an isolated phenomenon. It concretizes the change of religion's weight in the late modernity culture. I will briefly mention this change, because it offers a point of reference that can help us judge what happened.

My thesis is that religion itself recorded the effects – not just punctual, but also structural – of modernity; also, religion itself is at the base of modernity conditioning the present civilization, and therefore the exposition of the situation of religion that Nicklas Luhmann tried to present is inevitably more complex.

Heinz Gollwitzer stated, back in 1964, in *Europabild und Europagedanke*, that Europe owes its idealism to Christianity. "Christianity only – he wrote – was in the situation to promote an ideal community. The circumstance that the West and Europe became a spiritual community, an idea, happened only when *homo europaeus* recognized the ideal of *homo christianus*". We can say even today, with strong arguments: **no other acknowledgement of the human condition has the conciliation potential that Christianity has.** But Christianity itself can fructify this motivating and conciliating potential only if it proceeds in three directions: the rationalizing of the incomprehensible, in the sense that, far from mysticism, faith is supported by rational arguments and developed up to the moral level that cultivates the value of the human being and its responsibility; universalization, in the sense that the neighbor is not reduced to the member of an ethnical, political community, but identified simply with the human being; ecumenism, in the sense that no church can claim it is the exclusive carrier of the Christian message.

2.3.4. The return to the Judeo-Christian traditions

Therefore, we move, as citizens of the civilized world, inevitably, within some coordinates that we owe to the Judeo-Christian tradition. On this background, **the Jerusalem-Athens-Rome triangle, situated at the foundation of European Civilization, comes once more into attention. We return always to the religion originated in Jerusalem, to the philosophical rationalism illustrated by Athens, to the citizen rights promoted by Rome and to the search for equilibrium, ours, as people, in a world that sometimes seems to have escaped any control.** Today, some of the relations within this triangle are obvious and we will mention just three of them: **there is no alternative for citizen rights; science and philosophy will continue to be themselves only if they stick to immanent explanations for world's phenomenon: religion cannot be taken over or surpassed by science (as Comte wished sometimes), nor by philosophy (as Hegel hoped), nor by human beings emancipation (as Marx was convinced).**

After 1989 countries of Eastern Europe engaged in a transition towards an open society. After more than a decade of transition, it became obvious that it is not enough to adhere to the value system of the free world in order to finalise the transition. There is also a need for culture, including political culture, and more profoundly, there is need for people motivated for freedom, based on personal initiative. The transition is visibly slowed down by collectivist mentalities, by the passivity of the distributive state. In any situation, however, it was proved that transition is dependent on cultural values, most obviously seen in the connection between personal

convictions and daily behaviour, and here religion plays a crucial role. For it is also proved that religions motivate social behaviour and people's experiences. My thesis is that the common argument that 'everything starts from economics' – against any appearances – is a false, since it hides and it ignores the cultural dependence of economical behaviour (and Germany is a living truth of this).

2.3.5. The reintegration of religion in universities

In talking about the role of religion in education, after 1989, in Eastern European Countries religion came back in the educational realm, and in many universities theology regained its original place (Babes Bolyai University of Cluj, with its four faculties of theology representing seven denominations, being perhaps the most significant example). Christianity offers again today, in our European culture, the framework for a new solidarity around some true spiritual values capable to sustain and to promote morality. As always, Christianity offers values that would assist people to overcome difficulties: solidarity with the other whenever unfairness prevails; spiritual harmony whenever voracity is being unchained; the freedom of the person whenever mass ideologies become virulent. Christianity re-became salvific in European history whenever it engaged itself in protecting the freedom of conscience and of all the other rights of the human being, even within the context of communist regimes. Moreover now, in the aftermath of a totalitarian regime and within the context of new conflicts worldwide, Christianity offers the most apt moral support capable to create a disposition for recognizing the other and for good understanding among people.

2.3.6. The level of Bible integration in our culture and what is to be expected from religion

Related to the need for teaching the Bible, the Old and the New Testaments became again the focus of studies conducted by specialists. The Bible is again the Book of Books on which we dwell with our highest interest, for it is the way to the most profound foundations of the European culture, to which we belong.

What is the Bible's position within Romania's culture today? The fact that each pupil has the possibility to read the Bible in school is an enormous step ahead. Through its wonderful pages, the pupils have the chance of finding a superior meaning of life and higher motivational grounds. However, the Bible is inspirational in more than one way, and I will mention five. The Bible is a book that presents a clear vision of the cosmos; the Bible is the book of God's unique message and of the appearance of Jesus Christ – unique events of universal history; the Bible is the book of an old wisdom, confronted by all the avatars of history, resisting to any attacks. Please allow me to briefly describe the ways in which the **Bible** is being perceived in our culture today.

My thesis is that it is counterproductive to maintain the idea that religion as *thought* (Hegel) is opposed to religion as *feeling* (Schleiermacher). Feelings and thought are not as separated as it was often believed. Obviously, not always did religious living translate itself into concepts, but, however, there is a acerb need today for a clear vision of the world, and the Bible offers this vision. This vision was often seen as a dogma, meaning thinking petrified in fixed assumptions. However, there is now more and more room for the original meaning of the Greek word *dokein*, which is, to think in an orderly manner, starting from certain premises. It is obvious again that to think requires this ordering and the **Bible** does offer such a vision of the world.

The **Bible** inspires us to return from understanding time as a mere implacable passing, indicated by the chime of the clock, and to perceive the uniqueness of every moment. **Cronos**, the Bible teaches us, must be replaced with **Kairos**. The Apostle Paul warned the disciples that the coming of Jesus Christ is a unique event of world history, which was possible in a certain

moment of time. Universal history, therefore, does not follow uniform, implacable regularities, but it contains within it profound possibilities for renewal.

The **Bible** brings with itself the transcendental God, absolutely universal and freed from all the passions with which places and moments invested Him. The Bible places people in an universal community, in which each one counts firstly on the virtue of being a human being aware of God's existence and ready to put one's feelings, thoughts and acts in accord with the Divine rules, revealed since the time of Moses.

The **Bible** brings with itself the message of grace and salvation, which can move any human being. Through Messiah, God shows to all what they should do, and those who follow Messiah are concrete proves and models that can inspire others in their endeavors. Far from leaving the world in its accidental solidarity, God shows to the world a way of salvation, which is also the way of redemption.

The **Bible** is the ancient book of humanity and the depositary of a wisdom that conquered over the centuries. It was revealed to the Jews, but its message is universal and, therefore, it concerns every man. The Bible requires every man to make the care and concern for the other one's highest priority.

The position of the **Bible** in contemporary culture in Romania should be considered not only from an intellectual perspective. **My thesis is that we have an acute need in Romania today for a profound change of understanding culture relative to the generations preceding us. In this sense, by culture we should understand more than philosophical ideas, artistic symbols, scientific theories and ideological programs. Culture means all of these, but only together with their embodiment in the various forms of the social living of human life.**

If this understanding of culture prevails – in other words, if we are ready to place culture within the ethos of our professions, within our passion for work, in our devotion to renewal, in our care for a high civic stand and for a high quality of argumentation – only then will there be an open door for and an effective possibility to come out of the overall encompassing crisis in which Romanian is found today. And with this I am back where I began. Regardless of how we look at things, by description or interpretation, there is no way out of the motivational crisis, the political and cultural crisis, the administrative and economical crisis, without new attitudes and new ways of putting energies to work, without new motivation and without a new ethos. And here religion and churches can have a greater role than they ever had in the recent history of Romania.

2.3.7. Report from Section 3 (Marius Radu)

Chair

His Eminency Dr. Ernst Neumann, Chief Rabbi of the Jewish Community of Timișoara
Rev. Professor Wilhelm Dancă, PhD, Rector of the Faculty of Roman-Catholic Theology, Iași
Rev. Professor Paul Negruț, PhD, President of the Romanian Baptist Union, Rector of Emanuel University Oradea
Rev. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Lèszai Lehel, Faculty of Reformed Theology, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj Napoca
Rev. Nicolae Dascălu, Counsellor for Culture, Mitropolia Moldovei și Bucovinei, Romanian Orthodox Church

Key Note Speaker 3:

Prof. Andrei Marga, PhD, Rector, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj Napoca

Rapporteur: Marius Radu, MA

Secretary: Camelia Cocioba

2.4. CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES' CONTRIBUTION to the Objectives of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe

Mihai-Razvan Ungureanu, Regional Envoy for the Stability Pact in South Eastern Europe

2.4.1. The United Europe - a project in which the Church community is called upon to play a more dynamic role.

United Europe represents both a significantly symbolic project and an inherent expression of ethnic cohesion within an interchanging global environment. In South Eastern Europe, much of the turmoil and conflict has emerged as a result of religious strife. The Church community is called upon to play a more dynamic role.

2.4.2. The Balkans - Preventive diplomacy in moral terms.

Preventive medication in moral terms. Morality at the centre of preventive diplomacy. Where do morality and practicality meet? Use of education and cultural change to promote preventive diplomacy. Establishment of the International Centre for Interethnic Relations and Protection of Minorities in SE Europe (at the Institute for Ethnic Studies in Ljubljana).

2.4.3. Stability Pact's vision of a multi-dimensional preventive diplomacy system.

Post-Cold War conflicts and nationalistic tensions in Europe require new means of resolution: preventive diplomacy and human rights protection are the best suited foundations for managing multi-ethnic tensions before they become violent. The core of the Stability Pact's activities is geared towards maintained progress via European integration, efforts being focused on three main areas: democracy and human rights, economic reconstruction and development and security issues.

2.4.4. Stability Pact's regional approach.

The Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, bringing its regional approach, adds a cooperative approach through its network of resources. The Stability Pact does not operate any particular task force on church communities. Yet, issues such as: human rights; promoting multiethnic societies and ethnic reconciliation; promoting intercultural dialogue; gender; media, are of special significance for ecclesiastic representatives of the Church and of religious communities throughout South Eastern Europe.

2.4.5. Stability Pact: a new vision of Church's insertion in SEE societies.

Five principles of action for identifying religious freedom as a right, recognizing that it deserves protection and showing respect to spiritual and religious need: 1. Christianity has always stressed the continuity of faith and reason; 2. Christianity is a tradition that honors its cumulative heritage; 3. Christianity at its best has been non-elitist; 4. Christianity has stressed that the human enterprise is essentially communal; 5. Christianity is based on the sacramental principle.

2.4.6. The challenges ahead.

The only way we can define stability nowadays is in cultural terms. Stability precludes mere political rhetoric and implies an agreed upon set of norms regarding political behaviour as well as good neighbourliness. Social implication as the first step towards political reforming of the societies. Religions of peace and their common moral precepts should offer good ground for

stability. Churches are vehicles for earthly compromise between fellow human beings and, as such, they represent a new formula of conflict resolution. Ecclesiastic diplomacy (more subtle and persuasive) can become a counterpart of classical diplomacy (which is based on political and executive decisions). Offering grounds for a spiritual-societal dialogue between governmental and ecclesiastic institutions.

2.4.7. The policy of open doors.

Opening the door of various international bodies and initiatives (such as the Stability Pact or OSCE) to representatives of the Church's institutions. Open gates for the missionaries of good neighbourliness. Institutionalising the religious dimension of international initiatives (such as OSCE). Introducing this ecumenical dimension to the political dialogue would generate many benefits, least of them being an overall moral rehabilitation of political issues in the Balkan area and also a rethinking of the false exceptionalism that continuously threatens good relations in the area. The ideal of a *Respublica Christiana* - a challenging project of moral as well as social and political reconstruction that would bring on stability and peace.

2.4.8. Report from Section 4 (Eugen Nagy)

Chair:

Professor Vasile Boari, PhD, Dean of the Faculty of Political Science, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj Napoca

Ovidiu Ganț, UnderSecretary of State, Ministry of Public Information

His Holiness Daniil Stoenescu, Bishop, Romanian Orthodox Church, Vrșeț

Pr. Dr. Branislav Stankovic, Serbian Orthodox Church, Timișoara

Rev. Kovács Zsombor, Evangelic Lutheran Church, Timișoara

Key Note Speaker:

His Excellency Mihai Răzvan Ungureanu,

Regional Envoy of the Special Coordinator for the Stability Pact

Rapporteur: Eugen Nagy, MA

Secretary: Alina Dușu

The session began with the presentation made by His Excellency Mihai Răzvan Ungureanu, Regional Envoy of the Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact for South East Europe. HE underlined that the united Europe is a common symbolic project and an expression of the cultural cohesion for the whole European civilization, at the beginning of the XXIst Century. Exceptionally, it is also the vector that is orienting the foreign policies for every state in the region. This success of this project depends not only on the functionality of some mechanisms, but on the very capacity of rehabilitating the Balkans. This region, while fragmented and heterogeneous, was historically united by the common Orthodox culture and by the tradition of the minority churches' coexistence. Also, many of the conflicts in the South-East European region involved this religious component.

In the process of constructing a complex project of preventive diplomacy, capable of offering moral solutions to individual and collective problems, the involved institutions should use all their resources of political creativity. The process of preventive diplomacy should construct, analyse and involve all the dialogue levels that could contribute with solutions, while focusing on the central issue of respecting human rights, in order to provide with an adequate management of interethnic and inter-community tensions. It is a more appropriate solution than to build policies focused on "epidemic control", treating the whole through a part of it, because of a superficial understanding of the situation.

The Stability Pact is one of the most complex initiatives in the region of South-East Europe, because it involves in the process not only governmental and European institutions, but NGOs, think-tanks, civic initiatives and solidarities of many kinds. Their common action confers legitimacy and credibility to the preventive effort, that addresses three key areas, with the final goal of the European integration of the South-East European countries: democracy and human rights, economic development and reconstruction, regional security and stability. The main goal is to build a culture of regional cooperation, based on mutually accepted compromises and long-term benefits. However, at the present time the Stability Pact has no concrete project or initiative that would involve the level of inter-religious dialogue in the Balkans. The reasons could be found in the lack of experience in dealing with such a dimension, as well as in the tradition of building secular rational political architectures. Yet, the SP works on rediscovering the common grounds for respecting the other: the intercultural and multi-cultural dimension of respecting human rights. These dimensions could represent a common ground for action involving the representatives of the denominational communities from South East Europe. A positive example could be found in some of the initiatives of the working group on “Human rights and the rights of national minorities” of the Working Table nr.1 of the Stability Pact.

Stability is not a pure political product, but a cultural one, because it involves all the aspects of the social, economical, political life that could be considered as stable. The churches and denominations of the region present us with a great opportunity for accomplishing a new political contract between the political entities of the region, by aiding in the transforming of short-term, survival oriented policies, in long- or medium-term geopolitical affirmation strategies. The, subtle and pervasive, yet coherent and constant in interests ecclesiastic diplomacy has, by its very nature, a preventive character. Neither is this ecclesiastic diplomacy a “minor species” of the political one, nor is it restrained only to the political sphere. In fact, it deals with issues of legislation, of cultural stereotypes, being capable to decisively help building a new collective imaginary in the region. Therefore, the solution for the accomplishment of the political goals of stability in the region is a policy of “open doors” for the transparent and moral involvement of these ecclesiastic representatives in the elaboration and the implementation of the conflict and crises prevention strategies. A possible project, in this regard, would be the redefinition of proximities from a perspective of converging interests, in a wider approach that could be an ethically based “missionarism of the good neighborhood”.

Mr Silvo Devetak, the president of ISCOMET, added that, exactly for these reasons, the Stability Pact should support in a much stronger manner this inter-religious dialogue, as well as the concrete involvement of the churches and religious communities in the effort of constructing stability in the region. The Maribor Initiative, a project that focuses on the role of churches and religious communities in developing human rights, democracy and stability in South Eastern Europe, is organising several round tables (such as the present one) exactly with these goals: searching ways and means for protecting the human rights and especially the religious freedoms, in order to build a culture of cooperation and stability in South Eastern Europe.

HE M.R. Ungureanu responded by specifying that the creation and implementation of such projects is made difficult by a certain lack of demand as well as by the a weak “project culture” in the region.

Prof. Vasile Boari began his intervention with a consideration upon the “state of the world” after September 11, 2001. He underlined that neither the “realistic” nor the “relativistic” paradigm succeeded in providing a complete explanation of the events. The politics are undergoing a crisis of legitimacy and efficiency. Thus, a new ethical -political paradigm is necessary, that cannot

ignore the spiritual factors. The question is which values do the major religions offer for founding such a paradigm. The Christian religion's offer is "love" – as a principle that could found and guide a new view on international relations.

Mr. Ovidiu Ganț presented the efforts and the accomplishments of the Ministry of Public Information, regarding the protection and promotion of the rights of minorities. Of these, one could mention as especially important the general use of bilingual plates in the communities where a minority group represents at least 20% of that population, the Government order banning the manifestations that promote extremist ideas or historical figures, the fact that the national minorities can use their national signs, as well as the retrocession of the goods confiscated after World War II from the Jewish community.

Father Branislav Stankovic, of the Serbian Orthodox Church started by evaluating the history of the relations between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Serbian Orthodox Church. When talking about the present situation in the Balkans, we speak about an economical as well as a political crisis, a political crisis that was accentuated by the events of September 11, 2001. However, the main crisis is a moral one, which is at the very core of the other ones. It is to be noted that sometimes aspects of the contemporary ideologies contradict the ethical norms of Christianity – such as the promotion of the sexual minorities or of the abortion. About the present initiative, let us all pray that if we cannot always be one alongside the other, we should be one for the other.

Rev. Kovács Zsombor, speaking as the personal representative of HH Bishop Mòzes Árpád and as a member of the Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Romania, expressed that one of the tasks of the Churches in order to accomplish the common goals mentioned in the previous discussions, is to direct the members of their communities towards the acceptance of the other, from another community/denomination. This is most important because sometimes the very pertaining to a certain denomination or ethnic group could be an element that leads to conflict. Democracy is a paradigm for which issues such as the freedom of opinion are of central importance, but it is crucial to take into account the moral values of these acts. Just to give an example: the freedom of opinion cannot be a justification of the hatred towards the other.

Mr. Adrian Lemeni underlined the special nature of the ecclesial institutions, referring to their iconic nature. These institutions have an eschatological purpose that impedes in considering them as only "social" institutions. This feature is critical for the correct understanding of their possible role in the society.

Father Eugen Jurcă supported the idea that an amoral democracy is not possible. While we discussed about general problems of our society, we should particularise the problems. After a thorough analysis, we would see that one of the most important tasks ahead us is the moral recovery of the Romanian society.

The ideologies are no longer tolerable, no matter of which type they are, said Father Iustin Marchiș. Any "-ism", no matter how appreciated it might be in some circles (as is Marxism), is to be avoided; in order to see the real face of these ideologies, the historical Romanian experience of living under different ideologically impregnated regimes could provide us with useful instruments. Another idea specifically emphasised by Father Marchiș was the necessity of improving communication between the people. One of the reasons why we encounter so many difficulties, in this regard, is the difficulties we have in communicating with our Creator. One of the concrete requirements of our time is, for example, to take the Christian-Jewish dialogue beyond the official level.

Mr. Viorel Dima of the 7th Day Adventist stressed out the responsibility of the majority denominations to assume responsibility in case of crises, in the process of managing such situations. A morally based emphasis on the specifics is necessary in the interdenominational dialogue, while respecting the rights for intimacy, autonomy and community.

While agreeing with the ideas that the majority has certain responsibilities towards the minority communities and that there is a need for an active ecclesiastic diplomacy, Father Ilie Albiciuc stressed that at the basis of all our actions, either common or specific, should be the respect towards the human person.

3. The Timișoara Declaration on The Role of Religious Communities and of Religious Freedoms in a Democratic Society

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

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

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

1. Religion is a necessary and valuable reality of the modern societies. The current circumstances in SEE put forward the actuality of the spiritual renewal of the societies concerned. In crisis situations, as important actors of the contemporary society, the churches and the religious communities are called to intervene through solidarity and common action in the name of brotherly love. The participants agree that ecumenism is the framework for an inter-religious dialogue based on the common elements, while preserving the specific identities. The ideological

and political instrumentalisation and manipulation of religion and faith, with the purpose of feeding inter-religious, inter-denominational or interethnic conflicts, is both abusive and illegitimate. In this respect, the participants of the Round Table condemn war and terrorism with religious justification and affirm that the true vocation of religion is to contribute to the preservation of peace and cooperation between people. Respect of the ethnic, religious, cultural, linguistic, and political diversity is a cornerstone for stability of the societies of the region.

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

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

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

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

In the new political circumstances the religious communities appear, as a spiritual factor, as the most stable social institutions in SEE. Having in mind the important role that churches and

religious communities have in the process of democratisation and improvement of human and of inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations and hence of stability of the region, the “Maribor Initiative” should be included as a priority in the program of the Working Table I of the Stability Pact for South – Eastern Europe.

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

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

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

Timișoara, 1 June 2002

4. Concluding Remarks, Words of Thanks and Acknowledgments

The Timisoara Round Table was a resounding success in that it drew together influential people from virtually all legally registered faith communities of Romania, influential lay leaders of opinion and governmental personalities with a direct interest on the role of religion in the promotion of democratic values and the rebuilding of civil society in the region. Perhaps the most prominent lesson learned from this event was the acknowledgment of the crucial role that religious communities have in the reshaping of the Europe of tomorrow. With their longstanding and enduring traditions and with their extremely high appeal to the people of Eastern Europe, religious communities are in the best position to take an active positive role in alleviating social fracture, preventing individual disintegration, healing broken relationships and promoting an ethos of acceptance and love.

It is our hope that the results of the Timisoara Round Table will be disseminated at all levels: local religious communities, governmental policy makers, local authorities and the non-governmental sector. To this end, concrete steps were already taken, which include: the production of a professional video tape, large circulation in the printed media, the preparation of a special edition of a highly regarded national magazine dedicated to the event, large circulation of the proceedings of the Round Table within national and international circles interested in the topics approached. There has already been a request for a follow up seminar to be organised locally by the Areopagus Centre in the autumn, with the goal of seeking various ways of future interdenominational cooperation.

Any seminar event requires a dedicated team of people to make things actually happen.

This particular event would not have been possible at all without the crucial role played by Silvo Devetak, the engine behind the very successful and useful ISCOMET Network for Democracy, Human Rights and the Protection of Minorities in South Eastern Europe. For this and for his trust in our local capability to enrol in such a venture and to make it successful, we wish to express our special thanks.

Special thanks go to:

His High Holiness Nicolae Corneanu, the Metropolitan of Banat, for accepting the role of spiritual patron of the event;

Mr Dan Sipos, the President of the Timis County Council and Mr. Gheorghe Ciuhandu, the Mayor of Timisoara, for their active support

Eugen Nagy, the *engine* behind the administrative machinery of the seminar.

Thanks are also due to Mrs. Ilona Mihaiesi, to our colleagues and friends from the Euroregional Center from Democracy and the Areopagus Center for Christian Studies and Contemporary Culture, as well as to the Rapporteurs' team and the translators for all their efforts in making this event a success.

Last but not least, our special thanks go to all the high officials of the European Union and the Stability Pact who supported the event, and to Mr. Walter Schwimmer, the General Secretary of the Council of Europe, for granting us his personal auspices in organising this event.

Silviu Rogobete, General *Rapporteur*
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5. List of Participants (Annex 1)

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