



NGO in Special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations since 2009
INGO with participatory status with the Council of Europe since 2005

Statement by Tom Sackville, President of FECRIS
at the
HUMAN DIMENSION
IMPLEMENTATION MEETING of the OSCE
Warsaw, Poland

Tuesday 29 September 2009 – 10.00 to 13.00 Fundamental freedoms I, including:

- Freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief
- Follow-up of the 2009 Supplementary HDM on Freedom of Religion or Belief

[Note: Because of the very large number of applications to contribute to the above session each speaker was allotted 2 minutes]

"I speak as President of FECRIS, an NGO recognised by the Council of Europe and the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. We are a grouping of voluntary family support and self-help organisations in 30 countries across and beyond Europe. Our members share a common aim - to help and support individuals who have been damaged by abusive cults, sometimes known as sects.

All face the same difficult and sensitive task, of dealing with individuals who live in fear of the senior members of the cult to which they belong or have belonged: their families meanwhile have been traumatised by the experience of having (in their eyes) lost a loved child or other family member: they are often fearful of the consequences for that person of any hostile action against the cult, and hesitate to talk to outsiders about a painful and difficult period of their lives.

So why are we here? We are here to highlight the plight of cult victims and their families, and point out that the organisations generally known as cults are totalitarian in nature, and infringe the basic human rights of their members. We do not believe that cults such as the Moonies, the Raelians and the Scientologists or their many front organisations and lobbyists have any role to play in a body such as the OSCE, the first regional security organisation to include a human dimension in its mandate. They are not religions, or even belief organisations.

We further believe that their participation in the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting organised by Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights is an affront to cult victims and their families, and gives spurious respectability to activities which would be deprecated by concerned, liberal minded people everywhere.