



**THE COMECE BISHOPS CALL FOR
THE REINSTATEMENT OF AN EU SPECIAL ENVOY FOR FREEDOM OF
RELIGION OR BELIEF OUTSIDE THE EU**

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion is an inalienable human right. It is enshrined in Article 10 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, itself a cornerstone of human dignity and a litmus test for human rights. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion makes for peaceful and pluralistic societies yet it remains under severe threat in many regions across the globe. As Catholic Bishops we witness with growing dismay the discrimination and persecution faced by individuals, religious minorities, and communities of faith – the majority of whom are Christians – who are targeted for their beliefs. We encounter daily the profound impact of religious persecution on individuals, families, and entire societies.

The EU has consistently affirmed its commitment to human rights as a central pillar of its external action. The mechanisms in place are in themselves very valuable but lack the focused authority and visibility required to address this crisis with the necessary vigor and consistency. The gravity of the situation demands a more robust, dedicated, and institutionalized response. The EU, founded upon values of human dignity, freedom, and respect for human rights, bears a particular responsibility to champion these values beyond its borders.

The position of EU Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the EU was established in 2016. It has proven instrumental in advancing this cause on the global stage and has served as a crucial voice for the voiceless to defend the rights of persecuted religious communities. Having someone in this role enhances the EU's capacity to monitor, report, and respond effectively to violations of religious freedom worldwide; and enables the EU to demonstrate a tangible commitment to protecting religious freedom as an integral part of its external human rights policy.

We are deeply concerned that this vital position has remained vacant for an extended period, sending a worrying signal to persecuted communities worldwide and to those who violate religious freedom with impunity. It suggests a diminished prioritization of this fundamental right within EU foreign policy at precisely the moment when such advocacy is most urgently needed.

We therefore call upon the European Commission to appoint a new EU Special Envoy without further delay, strengthening the mandate and allocating adequate human and financial resources for the Envoy's mission. We respectfully urge the EU to ensure that freedom of thought, conscience and religion remains a cornerstone of EU external action and human rights policy, integrated across all relevant foreign policy instruments.

Within the framework of the dialogue provided for in Article 17 TFEU, COMECE stands ready to support the work of a new EU Special Envoy and to collaborate with EU institutions in the advancement of thought, conscience, and religion for all people everywhere.

Signed by the bishops delegated by the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union gathered for the autumn Plenary Assembly of COMECE (3 October 2025).