



REPRESENTATION PERMANENTE DE LA FRANCE
AUPRES DE L'O.S.C.E

Translated from the French

**Freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief
(Working Sessions 6 and 7-Thursday, 26 September 2013)
French Delegation's reply**

Mister Chairman,

Referring to France's statement at the start of this session, I should like to respond to some of the statements we have heard this morning.

- Under its Constitution, France is a democracy which guarantees fundamental public freedoms, including freedom of conscience, religion and belief, in compliance with the principle of secularism.
- The About-Picard Act of 12 June 2001 does not infringe freedom of belief and does not target sects as such. It penalises certain types of wrongdoing punishable under the French Penal Code, such as abuse of the weakness or vulnerability of people placed in a situation of psychological subjection by means of pressures or techniques designed to alter their free will. The law is therefore a measure to protect individual freedoms.
- MIVILUDES acts in strict compliance with the values of the French Republic and does not make any judgment whatsoever about the beliefs or doctrines expressed by groups or individuals. It does not under any circumstances base its action on notions of "religion" or "sect" which are not defined in French law. Nor does it keep a list or register of movements. Most cases of abuse found by MIVILUDES take place outside a religious framework, in spheres as varied as healthcare, training, the education of minors, etc.
- Many countries share France's concern to combat sectarian abuses: some have introduced a measure similar to the About-Picard Act into their domestic law, while others are considering such legislation.

Thank you for your attention./.