

Press Release

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Intercultural and interfaith dialogue: governments, religious leaders and experts to meet in Nizhny Novgorod

Strasbourg, 01.09.2006 – On 7 and 8 September, an international conference in Nizhny Novgorod on intercultural and interfaith dialogue, organised by the Russian Federation in conjunction with the Council of Europe, will bring together some 300 government representatives, experts and leading figures from religious communities all across Europe. Those taking part will look at the challenges and opportunities of cultural diversity, the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue and the contribution the media can make to greater mutual understanding.

The conference will be attended by the Russian Minister for Regional development, Vladimir Yakovlev, the President of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, René van der Linden, and the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg.

It forms part of the programme of the Russian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers (May-November 2006), which aims to give strong impetus to the organisation's current activities in the priority area of intercultural and interfaith dialogue. The cultural, ethnic and religious diversity of Russia, a Council of Europe member country since 1996, offers an appropriate framework for the debate on the Council's future approach to managing diversity, particularly its religious dimension, with a view to achieving a stable and cohesive society based on human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

The conference also complements the series of seminars organised by the Commissioner for Human Rights since 2000, as part of a regular dialogue on human rights topics with European religious leaders.

The entire conference will be open to the press ("Gerbovy" Hall, Nizhegorodskaya Yarmarka, Nizhny Novgorod). A **press conference** will be held on **Friday 8 September at 1 pm**.

Journalists requesting **accreditation** should contact Olga Vasileava, Russian Ministry of regional development, tel. +7 495 775 31 71 (extension 185).

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