

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

23 September 2011

Sikh Council UK Meets with Italian Authority in London Embassy

The Sikh Council UK's senior representatives were invited to attend a preliminary meeting with the Italian Authority at the London Embassy ahead of its meeting in Rome on Monday 26th September.

The meeting held this morning between the acting head of the Italian UK Mission, Minister Stefano Pontecorvo and Sikh Council UK's representatives, Gurmel Singh, Secretary General, and Dabinderjit Singh, Secretary, was to prepare the groundwork for a fuller discussion planned in Rome with the relevant Italian Government departments.

The meeting held today was at the behest of the Italian Authority and a first step in officially opening the dialogue and discussing resolutions to the issues faced by the Sikh's travelling to Italy. The concerns and exchanges were well received and the Minister also put on record that:

- I. The expectation is that, the meeting with the representatives of Sikh Council UK and the Italian Sikh community, in Rome, would hopefully signal a move to the UK's method of searching the Sikh turban
- II. The Italian authorities will work to Inform the European Commission of this move and work with the UK Government for a change to the EU regulation at the earliest opportunity so respect for the Sikh turban is recognised in EU law
- III. The Italian Embassy would not be represented at the Dastar Awareness event being organised on 25th September as this would be inappropriate but that he was pleased the event was now more about awareness rather than a protest.

The Sikh Council recognises that these are early days but appreciates the very positive moves made by the Italian Authority in seeking to resolve a very painful chapter in the Sikh Panth's recent history.

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh

On behalf of the Sikh Council UK

For further information

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Background Information and recent press release

The Sikh Council UK announced on 21st September that it has secured a meeting in Rome with the Italian Authority which will be attended by the relevant Italian Government departments in order to discuss and find a resolution to the ongoing problems faced by the Sikhs travelling to Italian airports.

The Sikh Council UK, working with a number of Sikh organisations has been invited by relevant Italian departments to a meeting in order to start the process on agreeing a protocol on the searching of the Dastar at Italian Airports along the lines already established as a precedence with the UK Government. The Sikh Council UK hopes this will be another important step towards a Europe-wide solution.

The Sikh Council is seeking an immediate implementation of such an agreement and will work towards getting it enforced across Europe as Sikhs across Europe have been subjected to humiliating security checks since the new security directives have come into force.

The Sikh Council has been in open dialogue with the European Commission as well as the EU departments concerned with transport security over the last 4 months. Finally the hard work is showing positive results.

It is critical that the Sikh Panth focuses on the objective of securing a resolution to the pain and distress that our Panth has faced for too long and the Sikh Council UK would urge all Sikhs to work in harmony in securing our right to freely wear the Dastar.

The Sikh Council will be issuing a statement after the meeting on the 26th and will keep the Panth informed of the progress made.

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh

On behalf of the Sikh Council UK

21st September