



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

PRESENTATION OF THE PROGRAM AND PRIORITIES OF THE HUMAN DIMENSION COMMITTEE IN 2014

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 23 January 2014

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to inform the Permanent Council of the program and the priorities of the Human Dimension Committee in the current year.

The Human Dimension Committee is not the easiest of the committees. There are different approaches among the 57 to fundamental issues on our agenda. We have different priorities and sometimes we may interpret differently the commitments we have entered into.

But I shoulder the challenge of chairing the Committee confident that I have the full support of the Chairmanship and of all my colleagues around this table. I also enjoy strong support from my own capital, which has been kind enough to strengthen my small delegation with a Human rights expert to help me meet your expectations.

The decision to say yes to chairing the Human Dimension Committee was therefore not a difficult one. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for asking and thank you for your confidence in me. Allow me also to thank you for your support and active participation during the preparatory work during the last weeks.

Dear colleagues,

An important objective of Switzerland's Chairmanship of the OSCE is improving people's lives. This must be a guiding principle for our work in the Human Dimension Committee.

Our area of work has a direct bearing on the stability of our societies, on the relations between our countries – and on the everyday life of our citizens.

I see the Swiss chairmanship's emphasis on implementation of our OSCE commitments in light of this.

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The first meeting of the Human Dimension Committee under my Chairmanship took place on Tuesday. I would like to use this opportunity to thank all delegations for actively contributing to our discussions, for words of support, but also for critical remarks.

At the meeting of the Committee on Tuesday we circulated an overview of the 13 main topics we intend to bring up for discussion in the committee. The number of topics reflects that we plan for 13 ordinary meetings, not counting the first and last meetings. It also reflects that I will continue using the standing agenda introduced by the Chairman of the Permanent Council, when he chaired the Human Dimension Committee.

Our list of main topics includes freedom of media, freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of religion or belief and freedom of assembly and association. It includes tolerance and non-discrimination, national minorities, national human rights institutions, promotion and protection of human rights while combatting terrorism, gender, death penalty and trafficking.

To introduce the different main topics we are in the process of inviting guest speakers, including UN special rapporteurs. We will of course draw heavily upon prominent representatives of our own organisation, including the Representative on Freedom of the Media, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the three Personal Representatives on tolerance and non-discrimination, the Special Representative on Gender Issues, the Senior Adviser on Gender Issues as well as the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings.

We will follow up the practice from previous years of inviting the chair of the Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions to update us on the activities of her committee.

Since the Director of ODIHR will leave this summer, we have invited him to come to the committee and share with us his reflections on human dimension issues, based on his experience as Director of ODIHR.

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Chairman, colleagues,

When working out the list of main topics for the Committee, we have taken the overall Swiss priorities for the human dimension as our point of departure. I have in addition taken the liberty of making sure that some of Norway's own priorities are reflected. We have – of course – taken into account the valuable input we have received during informal consultations with participating States earlier this month.

It will not come as a surprise that few will find *all* their priorities included. In addition to conflicting inputs, we have – if I may say so – been given contradicting inputs. It is not easy to accommodate participating States that ask us to concentrate on consensual topics and at the same time themselves request us to include issues of great dispute.

But I would like to add that I see great merit in discussing issues where there is no consensus and where we may not reach consensus in the foreseeable future. In this regard I strongly agree with the Chairperson-in-Office, Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter, who at the Council meeting last week encouraged us to make the most of the OSCE's potential as a forum for dialogue.

It is also important to see the priorities for the Committee in light of the overall human dimension work program of the Chairmanship. Topics not included among the Committee's priorities, may very well be included in one of the planned human dimension events.

Some delegations have asked us to include issues related to reform of the Human Dimension. In defining the list of main topics for the Committee I have based myself upon the assumption that reform issues will be part of the Helsinki +40 process and consequently be part of work of the Helsinki + 40 Human Dimension Coordinator.

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According to established practice we will invite to the Committee OSCE executive structures to present their work and keep us updated on new developments within their mandates. The plan I presented to the Committee on Tuesday includes a number of briefings by ODIHR and by the Representative on Freedom of the Media.

These briefings give us an opportunity to discuss several issues of importance, not included among those which will be addressed as “main topic”.

Dear colleagues,

The final point I would like to make concerns item 3 on the Committee’s standing agenda: Reports by participating States on implementation of commitments and follow-up to recommendations.

Reporting is voluntary, but I strongly encourage delegations to use the opportunity this agenda item offers to report on implementation of commitments and on follow-up on recommendations from OSCE institutions.

I regard this as an important part of the work of the committee, also because it supports one of the main Swiss objectives for the Human Dimension, namely strengthening the implementation of existing commitments.

I would like to underline that this agenda item may also be used to highlight recommendations you do *not* intend to follow up and to explain why.

Mr. Chairman, colleagues,

At the Committee meeting on Tuesday, and today, I have not been in a position to present a full work program for the Committee. We are still working on details and on *when* to discuss which topic. I hope to be able to present to the Committee more details at our next meeting, scheduled to take place on 4. February.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, this concludes my presentation.