



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**13th Winter Meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly,
General committee on Democracy, Human rights
and Humanitarian Questions.**

**Presentation of program and priorities of the Human Dimension Committee,
by Ambassador of Norway, Mr. Robert Kvile,
Chairman of the Human Dimension Committee**

Thank you, Madam Chair, for this opportunity to inform your committee of the priorities of the Human Dimension Committee in the current year. Thank you also for accepting my invitation to speak to the Human Dimension Committee in March. I speak on behalf of every member of the Human Dimension Committee when I say that we very much look forward to welcoming you and to listen to your update on the activities of your committee.

It is obviously very important that the committees of the organisation and of the Parliamentary Assembly keep in close contact. Your meeting here in Vienna today and tomorrow gives us an opportunity to look for ways to strengthen this contact.

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The Human Dimension Committee has over the past years applied a standing agenda which has contributed to more structured and efficient meetings. Simply put it includes a main topic, typically focusing on fundamental Human rights, it includes voluntary reports by participating States as well as reports and briefings by OSCE executive structures.

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When working out the list of main topics for the Committee, I have taken the overall Swiss priorities for the human dimension as my point of departure. I have taken into account input from participating States, but I have also taken the liberty of making sure that some of Norway's own priorities are reflected.

This has resulted in a list of main topics that includes freedom of the media, freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of religion or belief and freedom of peaceful assembly and of association. It includes tolerance and non-discrimination, national minorities, national human rights institutions, promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism, gender equality, death penalty and trafficking. These are the priorities of the Human Dimension Committee in 2014.

Not all delegations are 100 % happy with my choice. Some delegations have had to accept that their priorities will be part only of the agenda of human dimension events and not of the committee. Others hold the view that I have put too much emphasis on certain fundamental rights, in particular on freedom of expression and freedom of the media.

Some have argued that we should avoid non-consensual issues. But 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 of Switzerland, Didier Burkhalter, who has encouraged us to make the most of the OSCE's potential as a forum for dialogue.

On the other hand we hope to see opportunities for consensus evolving on certain issues that could be the subject of decisions at the Ministerial Council in Basel. I hope the work in the committee can contribute to this.

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Let me now turn to voluntary reports by participating States.

I have encouraged participating States to report to the Committee 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 am happy that many delegations have indicated to me that they will make voluntary reports during the course of the year. I have also noted that a few delegations are opposed to using the Committee as a platform for voluntary reporting.

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Before I conclude I would like to make three additional points.

First on civil society: The Swiss chairmanship has defined stronger involvement of civil society as a priority. Personally I would have liked to see civil society play an active role also in the work of the committee. My ambitions in this regard must however take into consideration strong opposition from some delegations.

Secondly, some delegations have suggested that we draft a text for Basel to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in 2015. I think this is a good idea and in line with earlier practice.

And finally, concerning the discussions on a possible reform of the Human Dimension. This work – at least for the time being – will not be part of the work of the committee, but rather of the Helsinki + 40 process. Discussions on Human Dimension reform will therefore be pursued under the leadership of the Helsinki + 40 Human Dimension Coordinator.

Madam chair, this concludes my statement. Thank you for your attention.