



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM),
Opening Session,
Warsaw, 22 September 2014

Mr Chairman,

I join others in thanking ODIHR for the excellent preparations for this meeting, despite the regrettable difficulties caused by the unprecedented late adoption of the agenda this year.

We again welcome the new Director of ODIHR Michael Georg Link and look forward to cooperating closely with him.

Mr Chairman,

Let me state up front: HDIM is important! Both as a platform to receive feedback from civil society, and as a place to exchange best practices and difficulties faced in implementing our Human Dimension commitments.

Previous speakers have stressed the link between respect for human rights and stable, secure and peaceful societies. Civil society helps us as governments to identify the gaps and challenges in the implementation of our commitments, and they help us improve our policies to the benefit of all. Human rights defenders and independent media are not a threat, they are an asset. A lively civil society is a sign of a true democracy.

The pressure on civil society in several participating States is therefore of great concern to us. Human rights defenders are attacked, imprisoned or silenced. The abuse of the justice system to stop criticism is particularly worrying. Attacks on journalists are intended to stop information from independent sources and prevent citizens from being informed and expressing their opinions. These attacks must be investigated and prosecuted.

We greatly appreciate ODIHR's work on elaborating the Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders. Regrettably, the present situation clearly shows the need for these guidelines. We hope they will be widely used.

Mr Chairman,

The importance of respecting commitments is clearly shown by the situation in Ukraine. The Russian Federation's failure to respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine has led to the present crisis.

We commend the quick response from the OSCE institutions in sending the Human Rights Assessment Mission and providing support from the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom of the Media. The OSCE is now in a key position in resolving this crisis. The Special Monitoring Mission is a valuable tool. All parties must ensure that they can do their work safely and effectively.

Human rights and international law must be respected by all parties in a conflict.

This said, we should not let the situation in Ukraine overshadow our meeting. I am convinced the representatives of civil society will remind us that there are challenges to be addressed in all our countries.

Mr Chairman,

In times of conflict, structures and individuals are put to the test. Does the system in place hold? Do we still act in accordance with all our human rights obligations? Under testing circumstances, lack of implementation of commitments is exposed.

The OSCE and its institutions have knowledge and experience in assisting governments in their efforts towards democratic reform, good governance and respect for human rights. We urge states facing conflict, as well as all other participating States, to make full use of this valuable asset.

Mr Chairman,

The situation in many participating States shows the need to strengthen and update our commitments, in line with international obligations. This important work must be kept up. Citizens right to dignity and fulfillment of human rights must always have priority. We welcome the proposals by the Swiss Chairmanship to agree on Ministerial Council decisions on prevention of torture and an addendum to the Gender Action Plan. We also believe a Declaration on

civil society would be useful. We will do our best to assist in the efforts to reach agreement on these proposals, also in our role as chair of the Human Dimension Committee.

Mr Chairman,

Allow me to mention a few side events we are supporting. Norway, the Netherlands and France invite you to a working breakfast on enforced disappearances in the OSCE region on Wednesday 24 September. To-morrow at lunchtime we are co-organizing a meeting on the impact of mass surveillance on journalists, lawyers and other professionals. We are co-sponsoring with Latvia a lunchtime meeting next Monday on minority education and bilingual education. In addition, we are co-sponsors for an event on hate crime against LGBTI persons, one on civil society in Hungary and one on manipulation of state-owned media.

Mr Chairman,

In conclusion, let me stress that we consider these Human Dimension Implementation Meetings crucial for the overall aim of better implementing our common commitments. We are ready to discuss further improvement of the meetings as proposed by the Swiss Chairmanship.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.