



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**14th 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 you of the priorities of the Human Dimension Committee in the current year.

Madam Chair, distinguished parliamentarians,

The discussions in the Human Dimension Committee are clustered around a main topic, one for each of the 14 scheduled meetings. These topics reflect the priorities of the Chairmanship as well as inputs from participating States.

They include freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of religion or belief and freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.

They include tolerance and non-discrimination, national minorities, national human rights institutions, administration of justice and independent judiciary, gender, torture, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, death penalty and trafficking in human beings.

The list also includes priorities of my own country. In a white paper to parliament on human rights, published last December, the Norwegian government underlined that the two categories of human rights – civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights – are mutually reinforcing and that both categories therefore must be given priority. This has motivated me to include economic, social and cultural rights in the 2015 program.

Some of the main topics will be introduced by prominent representatives of the OSCE itself, others by UN Special Rapporteurs or by other experts from beyond our own organisation.

Madam Chair, distinguished parliamentarians,

Several topics on the OSCE agenda are cross-dimensional. We will reflect this by organizing joint meetings.

We plan two joint meetings of all three committees, one devoted to migration and one to promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism. In addition we will organize a joint second and third dimension committees meeting devoted to a topic that so far has received limited attention in the OSCE, namely business and human rights.

Madam Chair, distinguished parliamentarians,

Some delegations hold the view that I have put too much emphasis on fundamental rights and freedoms. Most delegations would however agree with me that issues where participating States do not live up to their commitments must remain high on our agenda.

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.

Some delegations also argue that we should avoid issues where we have no commitments. I disagree. On the contrary, the Committee has an important role to play in preparing the ground for new commitments – or for the strengthening of commitments we already have.

I will conclude my point on priorities by saying that the 2015 program focuses on issues that are of critical importance to our efforts to strengthen the security and stability in the OSCE area.

Madam Chair, distinguished parliamentarians,

It is my ambition that the Human Dimension Committee can serve as a forum for exchange of best practises. I have therefore encouraged delegations to make voluntary reports on their work to implement our human dimension commitments and on how they follow-up recommendations from OSCE executive structures. Last year we had 12 such reports, all made by participating States West of Vienna. This year several participating States from also East of Vienna have indicated to me their interest in making reports to the Committee.

Madam Chair, distinguished parliamentarians,

The only way an intergovernmental organization can remain relevant is to engage with the society and with institutions outside our own closed circles.

I will therefore continue to invite representatives of civil society to contribute to the discussions in the Committee.

Madam Chair, I see your participation at our meeting in May in the same light. Close relations between the organisation and the Parliamentary Assembly is important. It is important also because you, as parliamentarians, make laws and decide the budgets – both are important instruments for strengthening the implementation of the OSCE Human Dimension Commitments.

Thank you for your attention.