



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

Thematic workshop on Reviewing evaluating instruments of implementation of
OSCE Human Dimension commitments.

Berlin 16 – 17 July 2015

Session I: Instruments of systematic (regular) evaluation at the OSCE

Presentation by Ambassador Robert Kvile, Permanent Representative of Norway
to the OSCE, Chair of the Human Dimension Committee.

Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you very much for inviting me to participate in your workshop and to make a presentation
on the voluntary reporting by participating States at the Human Dimension Committee.

I intend to speak for 10 minutes, after which I look forward to discuss the role of the Human
Dimension Committee with you.

The basic premise of this workshop is that the OSCE patchwork of evaluation and assessment
tools is not systematic enough and insufficient to ensure effective scrutiny of how the 57 OSCE
pS implement their Human Dimension commitments.

I do agree, and I therefore also agree that we need to look at how this patchwork can be
improved.

My contribution to the debate will be to make a few points on the relatively recent tradition of
voluntary reports by participating States in the Human Dimension Committee.

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First, a little bit of background: The Human Dimension Committee was established by the
Ministerial Council at Brussels in December 2006. The Security Committee and the Economic
and Environmental Committee were established at the same time.

The Brussels decision spells out in four points the purpose of the Human Dimension Committee.
The first of them is the most relevant for our discussion today, namely “Discuss human
dimension issues, including implementation of the commitments of the participating States”.

A standing – or standard – agenda for the Human Dimension Committee meetings was introduced in 2011, by Ambassador Thomas Greminger, who chaired the committee in 2011 and 2012.

This standing agenda consists of four substantive agenda items:

- Main topic
- Preparation of and follow-up to Human Dimension events
- Voluntary report by participating States on implementation of commitments and follow-up to recommendations, and finally
- Briefing by OSCE executive structures

We have made an effort to ensure thematic coherence between the different agenda items in the meetings. For example, in our meeting the day before yesterday, all agenda items were on gender or gender equality.

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Let me now move to the reporting itself.

Since 2011 we have had 65 voluntary reports, by 31 individual OSCE pS. Some have – as you understand – made more than one report. The US and Albania have made five each. Switzerland has made four and Austria, Azerbaijan, UK and Kazakhstan have made three voluntary reports each.

Among those who have not made any reports we find eleven EU states, as well as several eastern OSCE participating States such as Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, the Russian Federation and Turkmenistan – as well as the Holy See.

I should mention that the Fundamental Rights Agency has made reports on behalf of the European Union.

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A wide variety of topics have been covered by these reports. The most frequently chosen topic is follow-up of recommendations after election observations. Another popular theme is related to tolerance and non-discrimination, including Roma and Sinti.

Several reports have been made on the implementation of commitments related to fundamental rights. It is also interesting to note that there have been several reports on cross-dimensional issues, for example on gender and gender equality, on trafficking in human beings and on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

I now move to lessons learned.

Do these reports contribute to a strengthening of the implementation of commitments? Do they represent a sharing of best practices – or worst practices for that matter? Do they trigger useful debates in the Committee?

If I were now speaking Norwegian, I would have answered with the word “tja”, which means yes and no.

Firstly: Reporting is voluntary. I can encourage delegations to make such reports, and I do. Sometimes successfully, sometimes not. One delegation has made it quite clear that they are not in favour of such reports in the HDC. Members of that delegation tend to leave the room during reports.

It is important to understand that those who do not want to be object of a peer review in the HDC can simply refrain from making reports.

Secondly: The participating States will themselves choose the subject of the report. Most States would prefer to avoid topics where their implementation record is weak. But not all. Some delegations – but not many! – may see a point in itself to make a report about an area where they face particular problems.

Thirdly, and related to my second point: Some delegations may be tempted to make reports that are intended to illustrate how democratic they are.

Fourthly, and perhaps the major weakness of the voluntary reporting: Many delegations do not have neither time nor capacity to prepare questions and comments related to the voluntary report. There is therefore normally little discussion after a voluntary report has been made.

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And finally to the key issue: How can the reporting to the HDC be made more effective?

Ideally, one would want to have a system such as the UN Universal Periodic Review. The introduction of such a system would require consensus at 57. That is not realistic.

According to the statistics we have worked out 26 participating States have never made a report to the HDC. But I do not see how we could make reporting obligatory. That would require a decision at 57. Not realistic.

It is, however, not so difficult to come up with a few ideas on how things could be improved. Some are realistic, others less. Let me take them one by one:

First idea: We – the chairman and his team – should work with the participating State planning to make a report to make sure the report addresses important and relevant OSCE human dimension commitments.

Second idea: We should ask that the report be distributed in writing well in advance, including to the relevant institution or institutions.

Third: We should more systematically involve our institutions in the peer review, including in the committee discussions after the presentations.

Fourth: We should encourage more delegations to prepare their comments and questions to the reporting participating State.

If we were able to do what I have spelled out in these four points, we would need more time than we can allot to this agenda item in ordinary meetings. My fifth idea is therefore that we may want to hold Human Dimension Committee meetings devoted exclusively to voluntary reports.

My sixth idea – and I am quite sure the one you would really like – is to invite civil society to participate in the peer review process, including of course in the meeting itself. This would really make a difference. But such a move would meet with strong opposition by some delegations. Some delegations may also find that voluntary reporting to the Human Dimension Committee with such measures would be too demanding.

Thank you for your attention!