



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

Human Dimension Committee, 19 January 2016.

First meeting of the Committee under Finnish Chairmanship
Statement by Ambassador Robert Kvile,
Chairman of the OSCE Human Dimension Committee 2014-2015.

Madam Chair,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Members of the Human Dimension Committee!

Thank you for this opportunity to report to you on the work of the Committee in 2015. I will concentrate my report on the issues we covered, on the speakers we invited to introduce these topics; I will also make a few points on the standing agenda and on the role of the Committee in the development of the OSCE acquis and finally on voluntary reporting.

Let me start with a few words on the topics we covered.

The HDC work program last year included fundamental rights and freedoms, CiO priorities and issues of particular importance to my own country. We tried at the same time to compose a program that reflected priorities among all 57 participating States. It goes without saying, however, that nobody can expect to have all their priorities included.

Madam Chair, ladies and gentlemen,

The 2006 MC decision establishing the three committees makes an explicit reference to the discussion of cross-dimensional issues. Last year we devoted two of our regular meetings to such issues, namely gender equality and trafficking in human beings.

In addition we further developed, in close cooperation with the two other committees, the practice of holding joint meetings on issues that do not fall exclusively within one of the dimensions. In June we organized a meeting of all three committees on protecting and promoting human rights while countering terrorism, and in September on migration.

In December, we had a joint meeting with the Economic and Environmental Committee, devoted to business and human rights.

I should also mention our special meeting in July on displacement.

Madam Chair, ladies and gentlemen,

Good introductions give good discussions. We therefore put considerable effort into finding the best possible experts to introduce the topics on the agenda. I am pleased that we among last year's speakers find several UN special rapporteurs, representatives of the Council of Europe and of UN Treaty Bodies as well as – of course – heads of OSCE institutions and personal representatives of the Chair in Office.

I am confident that you all agree with me that it is very useful to invite the heads of our institutions as well as CiO personal representatives to the Committee, in addition to their regular reporting to the Permanent Council.

In May, the Chair of the Parliamentary Assembly's General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions, Ms. Isabel Santos, addressed the Committee.

We continued the practice of inviting representatives of the Civic Solidarity Platform early in the year to inform the Committee about their recommendations to Ministers.

The many external high-level experts we have been able to welcome to the Committee, shows that our work is recognized as relevant and important also beyond the OSCE.

Madam Chair, ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me now to make a remark on the HDC standing agenda, introduced in 2011. I have continued applying this agenda, not only because it makes planning easier, but first and foremost because it ensures that we cover the main tasks of the Committee, as outlined in Ministerial Council decision 17/2006.

The standing agenda is, however, timewise quite demanding.

But there are ways of making the meetings more structured and efficient. One is to ensure thematic coherence between the different agenda items. This makes it possible to combine items. Another is to simply leave one of the agenda items empty. We have made use of both.

Madam Chair, ladies and gentlemen,

I disagree with those who argue that there is an imbalance in favour of the human dimension in our comprehensive approach to security. There will be no lasting security and stability without respect for human rights – all of them – and without tolerance and dignity for all.

The discussions in the Human Dimension Committee are therefore important – and it is important to regularly come back to the fundamental topics and themes.

But we have to make sure that the work of the Committee is relevant to the work of the rest of the organization, to the process of developing commitments and to ensuring full implementation of them, as outlined in Ministerial Council decision no 17/2006.

Let me make a few points in this regard.

First on the development of new commitments, or the strengthening of already existing commitments: There should be a link between the program of the Committee and the priorities for the Ministerial

Council. At least some of the themes discussed in the Committee during the year should return to the table of the Committee in the form of draft ministerial decisions or declarations.

Last year, as always, the Committee spent a lot of time on drafting possible MC deliverables. If we count all 3rd dimension proposals put on the table, we come to 14. Not all of them made the way to the drafting table, and some of them had to be abandoned rather quickly.

Others were discussed in detail. The fact that we in the end failed to reach consensus on any of the drafts, is regrettable but beyond the Committee itself.

One should not exclude the possibility of revisiting at a later stage some of the issues that failed in Belgrade. In this regard, I note with interest that torture is included in the 2016 HDC work program.

Madam Chair, ladies and gentlemen,

Now, finally, let me turn to the issue of ensuring implementation of commitments.

Our organization lacks a general monitoring instrument or an effective review mechanism. What we have is a patchwork consisting of – in particular – the HDIM, of review of current issues in the Permanent Council and of voluntary reporting to the Human Dimension Committee. Until and unless we are able to put in place a more systematic and effective OSCE review mechanism, voluntary reporting to the Human Dimension Committee will remain important.

Since 2011 we have had approximately 70 such reports, made by more than 30 participating States. In addition, the Fundamental Rights Agency has made reports on behalf of the EU countries.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank the many delegations that have made voluntary reports to the Committee.

Madam Chair, ladies and gentlemen,

Based upon the lessons we have learned so far, and input from delegations, I have formulated – for my successor – a few recommendations on how to further strengthen the voluntary reporting. These recommendations include points on the way such reporting should be prepared and carried out, others are on the topics that should be given priority.

I would like to highlight the special HDC meeting on 17th November last year, devoted exclusively to voluntary reporting on hate crime. That meeting gave the Committee a welcome opportunity for in-depth and focused discussions on a topical issue.

My recommendations are meant as an input to further work. I am confident that you, madam Chair, and those who will follow you later, will make your own assessments and come up with other ideas.

Madam Chair,

I very much enjoyed Chairing the Human Dimension Committee. I enjoyed it because the Committee deals with issues of fundamental importance. I enjoyed it because I had strong support from the OSCE Chairmanship, from Switzerland in 2014 and from Serbia last year. Thank you very much.

I enjoyed chairing this Committee because I was supported by a small but very competent and enthusiastic team.

I enjoyed it because of the strong support I had from Committee members and because they – you – made sure we had interesting debates.

But I also enjoyed chairing the Human Dimension Committee because our discussions illustrated that we come from different traditions and different realities.

Finally, dear colleague, I wish you every success as Chair of the Human Dimension Committee.

Thank you for your attention.