



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

OPENING STATEMENT

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the
Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM)
Warsaw, 10 September 2018

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

I join colleagues in thanking the Italian chairmanship for its tireless efforts to make HDIM take place. I thank ODIHR and its director, Ingibjörg Gísladóttir, for their admirable preparations under complex circumstances.

No *democracy* is flawless. Establishing a robust democratic spirit takes time. Democratically elected governments must strengthen the resilience of the democracy that brought them to power, not undermine it. We are concerned that some participating States have moved in the wrong direction.

There is an imperative of equality for all, without which the human rights cannot be fully realised. We must continue to stand up for equal opportunities for, and empowerment, inclusion and participation of women and girls.

The Human Dimension Implementation Meeting is important. Both as a platform to receive feedback from civil society, and to exchange best practices and debate challenges in implementing our Human Dimension commitments. ODIHR is an essential institution for the promotion of democracy, rule of law, human rights, tolerance and non-discrimination in our region.

We need *autonomous institutions* to safeguard the rights of all individuals, even in electoral democracies. Without rule of law, based on respect for human rights, and an independent and effective judiciary, universal rights are in jeopardy. The success of ODIHR depends upon participating States recognising the importance of protecting and maintaining its autonomy.

Three specific topics have been selected for this HDIM. While recognising their importance, we must not forget the paramount importance of the fundamental freedoms that form the backbone of the human rights.

- We are concerned that *anti-Semitism* continues to be alive in Europe and in particular that there appears to be an increase in violence. This clearly calls for an intensification of efforts to target the specific groups responsible for such acts. At the same time, we note that anti-Semitic attitudes show a downward trend in many countries and we should learn from national policies and actions taken to achieve this.
- *The freedom of the media* is under threat throughout the world, including in the OSCE region. We remain concerned about the negative trends in the working conditions for the media and sharp increase in hostile rhetoric, harassment, hate speech and attacks on journalists in a number of participating States. Journalists and media workers face great risks in order to disclose corruption and abuse of power, to expose violations of human rights and provide the public with information. Local reporters covering local issues are particularly at risk. As governments, we must do our utmost to ensure that journalists are safe and enjoy rightful protection in the OSCE area, and media is free to fulfil their independent societal mandate.
- On *migration*, there is a delicate balance between the obligation to respect and observe the human rights of all, and giving extensive benefits to irregular *migrants* as if they were refugees. We call on the participating States to support a Global Compact for Migration that will enable us to improve the governance on migration based on burden and responsibility sharing between countries of origin, transit and destination.

In many parts of the world *minorities* – be they ethnic, religious, linguistic, LGBTI or other - face increased discrimination and persecution. It is our task to foster inclusive environments for all our citizens, to ensure that the human rights of all our citizens are defended and not least to address firmly all violations when they occur.

Many members of our civil society organisations are present here today. They are human rights defenders and have a key role to play in strengthening respect for human rights in our region. Standing up for human rights in the face of danger and repression requires tremendous courage. Especially when some governments - whose responsibility it is to protect and implement human rights - impose laws and policies that do the opposite. We commend and applaud the work of our region's human rights defenders, and look forward to hearing their recommendations.

This is particularly important when we are experiencing that some organisations, under the guise of the principles of free expression, tolerance and non-discrimination use HDIM to express intolerant views while lamenting the freedom of expression of others.