



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORT ON THE
HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING 2018

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 4 October 2018

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Chair,

I join others in both welcoming ODIHR's director, Ms. Ingibjörg Gísladóttir, back to the Permanent Council and in thanking her for her report on the HDIM.

HDIM is a result of the will and commitments of participating States. To properly review the implementation of our human dimension commitments, we have found it necessary to hear from civil society as well as from each other. ODIHR has a role in making HDIM take place, but this role is administrative and organizational, and under the direction of the decisions taken by the participating States.

This year, ODIHR was put in a difficult position due to the lack of an adopted agenda. The lack of an agenda was no fault of ODIHR, but a failure of participating States to follow through on commitments. We support the decision of the Chairmanship-in-Office to hold HDIM without an adopted agenda. Going forward with HDIM was the smallest possible derogation from our commitments.

At the heart of HDIM is the interaction between states and civil society. This is its primary value. HDIM must remain an arena for civil society to voice their opinions and for states to respond and interact. This year, we have listened to representatives from national and international organisations and their human rights experts. We have listened to representatives from small, local organisations, struggling to make themselves heard. Some organisations are barely tolerated by their national authorities and face difficult working conditions. We value the contributions of civil society, also when we do not agree with them.

This year, as last year, some organisations, under the guise of the principles of free expression, tolerance and non-discrimination used HDIM to express intolerant views while lamenting the rights of others. They misunderstand what HDIM is; it is a meeting about the implementation of OSCE commitments in the human dimension. However, these organisations do not review implementation. They question the commitments. Also, some organisations did little but restate the positions of their governments. These practices do not add quality to the discussions at HDIM.

Still, if groups that we disagree with want to use the democratic mechanisms of the international community to engage in discussion, so be it. Long-standing practice of the participating States calls for the broadest possible participation at HDIM. The best way to counter these voices of concern is to challenge them.

In the wake of the Second World War, Karl Popper observed that even tolerant societies must limit its tolerance of intolerance, or else risk being consumed by it. In line with the values of our societies, we counter the intolerant by rational argument and keep it in check by public opinion. Only through such a clash of tolerance against intolerance, do we gain that great benefit described by John Stuart Mill: namely the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, that come from its collision with error.

Thank you.