



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by ODIHR on HDIM

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 30, 2014

Thank you, Director Link, for your report on the 2014 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. The United States strongly supports ODIHR, which has earned its place as the key institution in the OSCE's efforts to assist participating States in meeting their Human Dimension commitments by promoting democratic development, human rights, and free and fair elections.

We agree with you that this year's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting was a success. HDIM again drew a record number of participants and hosted a record number of side events. The high turnout shows that HDIM remains one of the most important events on the OSCE calendar. We continue to oppose any shortening of the HDIM. As we witnessed in Warsaw, there were so many speakers for the vast majority of the sessions that we could have used more time, not less, to devote to compelling and timely subjects that go to the core of our human dimension commitments.

HDIM remains the forum where any human dimension concerns can be raised and it is unprecedented in its ability to bring together governments and civil society. Director Link, we share your concern that all who wish to participate can, and can do so without fear of reprisal.

The United States chooses to stand with civil society. As President Obama said last month, "Human progress has always been propelled at some level by what happens in civil society - citizens coming together to insist that a better life is possible, pushing their leaders to protect the rights and the dignities of all people. And that's why the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that 'everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.' This is not a Western value; this is a universal right."

We call on ODIHR to work with the Swiss Chairmanship to ensure that streaming footage of this past HDIM remains archived and readily available to the public, as well as to ensure the streaming of future HDIMs, as already anticipated in the modalities documents. This is not really a pilot project but rather the continuation of livestreaming that first happened more than 10 years ago when we set up modalities to support efforts to expand our outreach, including the idea of live streaming. It was technically challenging back then, but technology has caught up with our intentions and we look forward to future years.

The United States takes HDIM and our OSCE Human Dimension commitments seriously. We are not afraid to be self-critical and to respond forthrightly to the concerns of others. We continually strive to implement our commitments fully. We regret that not all participating States are willing to engage in self-criticism and seriously respond to the concerns raised by participating States and civil society. In our closing statement at HDIM – and partly in response to the challenge laid out by Elisa Massimino in the opening session to each of us – we identified several actions that we intend to take following our consultations with civil society and other HDIM participants:

- We will continue to engage with civil society and the U.S. Congress about concerted efforts to close the detention facility at Guantanamo. It is a priority for the U.S. Government to ensure that our detention operations at Guantanamo are consistent with our international obligations.
- We will provide a briefing to participating States in an appropriate OSCE forum - such as the Human Dimension Committee or Permanent Council – on the findings and any policy recommendations that the U.S. Department of Justice has drawn from its investigation into the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri.
- With respect to the death penalty, President Obama called for a study of “the application of the death penalty in this country...” We offer to conduct an informal briefing on the results of this study when they are made public.
- On the protection of the rights of Muslims in the United States, we will make every effort to include in our delegation to HDIM next year officials who can share in more detail efforts by our government in this area.
- Finally, we will communicate the importance of ODIHR’s work and of the HDIM directly to Members of Congress and others, as well as reach out diplomatically in capitals of other participating States, to ensure that budgetary conversations include, as a priority, funding for ODIHR.

Director Link, HDIM is not an easy two weeks for ODIHR or for participating States – but it represents the most important two weeks of the year in the Human Dimension. You have made a compelling case why HDIM should be held in the spring. We join others who support this proposal and look forward to the HDIM next May.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.