



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORT ON THE
HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING 2019

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 17 October 2019

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Chair,

Like previous speakers, I welcome ODIHR's director back to the Permanent Council and thank her for her report on the HDIM.

HDIM is a result of the will and commitments of participating States. To review the implementation of our human dimension commitments properly, 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. This role is administrative, and under the direction of the decisions jointly made by the participating States. We agree with the director that ODIHR made a number of improvements to the conduct of the meeting this year. Especially welcome was the limit on introducers to allow more time for interventions from the floor.

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 requires sufficient time and broad participation. We have been impressed with Slovak chairmanship's steadiness/steadfastness in withstanding repeated calls for the non-participation of some civil society organisations. The commitment to open consultation on any such requests was necessary and in accordance with our OSCE commitments. This process belongs to, and only to, the

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participating States under the leadership of the chairmanship. We still find the Permanent Council to be the appropriate forum for decisions on these issues.

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.

As the director, we were disappointed to see attempts by some governments to silence their critics by interrupting with points of order merely to indicate disagreement with a statement. There is no need for states to sabotage their own meeting by abusing the rules of procedure.

When groups we disagree with want to use the democratic mechanisms of the international community to engage in discussion, we should let them. We should let them speak, and, if a response is required, we should respond. Interrupting speakers merely because they are speaking an uncomfortable truth is against the purpose of HDIM.

Thank you.