



United States Mission to the OSCE

Session 17

Human Dimension Activities

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Robert Bradtke,
Head of Delegation
OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
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The United States strongly supports the work of the OSCE structures and institutions to assist participating States with implementing their human dimension commitments. ODIHR, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Special Representative on Trafficking in Persons, the Special Representative on Gender Issues, the three Personal Representatives on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, the Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the other OSCE institutions and field presences are to be commended for their reports, activities, and engagement.

As these various OSCE institutions carry out their human dimension activities, we encourage greater coordination among them in order to avoid duplication and strengthen their abilities to build on and reinforce one another's work. This should include planning for seminars, workshops, and other meetings. We believe this would facilitate engagement by both participating States and civil society.

As we have heard over the past two weeks, the implementation of many of our core human dimension commitments remains challenging, making OSCE activities in this area more important than ever.

ODIHR's work providing objective assessments of the conduct of elections, promoting respect for human rights, and supporting the development of democratic institutions is crucial. OSCE's reputation as the standard-bearer in election monitoring reflects its established, objective criteria and procedures for election observation. ODIHR's autonomy must be preserved. We commend ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly for their efforts to cooperate and coordinate their election observation activities. Our collective ability to assess the conduct of elections in participating States and among OSCE Partners, and to improve the conduct of future elections, stems from the unique capabilities of ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly partnership for election observation.

The United States welcomes ODIHR's recommendations from the United States' November 2012 elections. We provided a voluntary report on these recommendations at the Human Dimension Committee meeting on September 3 and will continue to address the issues raised. We urge all other OSCE States to do the same. We recommend that the Director of ODIHR regularly report on the measures taken by participating States to comply with their election related commitments.

We also support the trial monitoring work of ODIHR, including its trial monitoring activity in Georgia. We applaud ODIHR's work on freedom of assembly and association, in

particular its 2012 report on monitoring freedom of assembly in several countries, including the United States.

In these times of budget constraints, we encourage ODIHR to focus its attention on the core elements of its mandate, and to direct its efforts to those situations where the gap between commitment and implementation is the greatest. As economic conditions continue to affect participating States' funding, it is ever more important that the OSCE as a whole, including ODIHR, direct its energies to those areas where its activities can have greatest impact and allocate its resources accordingly. We urge the Director of ODIHR to highlight key concerns and timely issues that may arise in areas covered by ODIHR's mandate.

The United States also places great importance on the work of the three Personal Representatives on tolerance and non-discrimination. ODIHR deserves praise for helping to organize the May 2013 High-Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination hosted by Albania. We urge participating States to reach consensus on the agenda for such important events early to allow ODIHR adequate time to prepare and to encourage wide attendance by civil society as well as representatives from capitals.

In the face of growing intolerance in the region, we support ODIHR's expansion of the Training Against Hate Crimes for Law Enforcement program to include prosecutors. Importantly, this training can also address anti-migrant and other prejudices held by members of the law enforcement community and can address concerns related to ethnic profiling that may hamper responses to hate crimes and other acts of discrimination. We also urge participating States to utilize the 2012 OSCE "Gender and Labour Migration Trainer's Manual" and OSCE/IOM "Training Modules on Labour Migration Management – Trainer's Manual" in their development and revision of labor migration policies and programs. Both manuals include information on addressing prejudice and discrimination faced by migrants and methods to facilitate integration, in addition to sustainable policy recommendations that could assist in promoting more positive views of migrants.

We view ODIHR's recent focus on peoples of African Descent as timely and encourage continued work in this regard.

The United States appreciates the work that ODIHR does in the regular course of the year – including what is done at HDIM and SHDMs. We note that with the addition of a 57th participating State, ODIHR's work has increased while its budget remains frozen. As ODIHR's expenses continue to grow, a matching increase in its budget is required.

The United States notes the remarkable work, often behind the scenes, done by the High Commissioner for National Minorities. We welcome Astrid Thors to her important position.

Likewise, the Representative on Freedom of the Media performs an important watchdog role, both publically and behind the scenes. The RFOM's Internet 2013 conference was a remarkable and useful event that highlighted the importance of protecting freedom of expression when it is exercised through new media just as we have protected the exercise of freedom of expression through traditional media. The same fundamental rights should be guaranteed online as well as offline. We were pleased that the RFOM's mandate was renewed this year, and emphasize again the importance we ascribe to the inclusion of online media as part of her responsibilities.

The United States continues to support the work of the OSCE field missions. We encourage the field missions – as well as ODIHR – to strengthen activities aimed at supporting the rule of law and judicial reform. We recognize the continued OSCE presence in Azerbaijan, and the important role it plays in all three dimensions. Bearing in mind the political and security transition in Afghanistan in 2014, we support the OSCE’s heightened attention to Central Asia and Afghanistan across all three dimensions, to advance security, prosperity, and respect for democratic processes and human rights, including support for women’s rights and participation at all levels of society, in the broader Central Asian region.

Finally, I want to focus on the participation of NGOs in OSCE events and field work in the human dimension. It is one of the elements that make the OSCE so valuable and our work at the HDIM so fruitful. The work of participating States in other OSCE fora – like the Human Dimension Committee – cannot substitute for engagement with and among NGOs at HDIM. We very much appreciated the opportunity to hear NGO views on the modalities for this meeting. The United States welcomes ideas to make HDIM more effective, but will not agree to any changes that would restrict or weaken our existing framework for public access and participation.

Thank you.