

Address by
Mr. Grzegorz Schetyna
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland
at the Opening Session
of the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
(Warsaw, September 21, 2015)

Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw.

In the beginning, I would like to commend the Serbian Chairmanship of the OSCE and personally Minister Dačić for the effective leadership throughout the year. Let me also express my appreciation to Director of ODIHR, Michael Link and his team for organizing this meeting and for your work in democracy and human rights. This event today is a major instrument for monitoring human rights situation in Europe and Central Asia and allows an open exchange of views and ideas with civil society.

Forty years have passed since signing of the Helsinki Final Act. Its Ten Principles have been recognized as universal values for the Euro-Atlantic community. Especially, the *“inviolability of frontiers, respect for territorial integrity, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms”* are all necessary conditions of peace and cooperation in Europe.

Policy of force and aggression and disrespect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are contrary to the spirit and letter of the Helsinki Final Act. Only full respect of all principles in all three dimensions of OSCE may restore trust and lower the tension in Europe.

Current situation has proved once again that security is a multidimensional matter. For last months the European security architecture has been weakened. The crisis in and around Ukraine brings new challenges for international community. The settlement of the conflict should be based on a principle of peaceful cooperation between states and on full respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine.

The OSCE remains a unique forum for discussing European security system –arms control, human rights, and economic or environmental issues as well. At the same time, its comprehensive character guarantees equal participation of states and other stakeholders.

The human dimension is a fundamental component of OSCE comprehensive concept of security. But this concept requires that all participating states fulfill their commitments undertaken in the field of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

The Polish peaceful transition proved how important efficient democratic institutions are, that freedom of speech, freedom of media and strong civil society are essential for long-term social development and political stability.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There can be no democracy without fair, transparent and inclusive elections. Therefore, we value deeply the role of OSCE in assisting states in electoral processes. I particularly commend the role of the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in the area of election observation. The cooperation in human dimension should strengthen mutual trust and security in the OSCE area. In this respect, we welcome the decision of the Government of Belarus to invite an election observation mission of ODIHR ahead of the October Presidential election.

Poland also highly values the ODIHR activity in fostering human rights, promoting democracy, rule of law and non-discrimination. We strongly oppose any attempts to restrict effectiveness and independence of the Office.

We shall not allow questioning the importance of human dimension in the OSCE acquis. Now a joint effort on a full implementation of human dimension commitments of the OSCE participating states should be a priority. The upcoming Ministerial Council Meeting in Belgrade is an opportunity to further reinforce the OSCE mechanisms of monitoring and verification.

In this context I would like to emphasize the role and relevance of the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. In our view, it is still a powerful tool and valuable platform for discussion on human rights and democracy, assisting countries to meet their commitments in the human dimension. Important voice in this debate comes from non-governmental organizations. We are very satisfied that this important Meeting is held annually in the capital of Poland.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me finish by quoting President Ford, who forty years ago in Helsinki said: "History will judge this conference not by what we say here today, but by what we do tomorrow - not by the promises we make, but by the promises we keep". Since then, great progress has been made, but we still have much to do to fulfill the promises we made forty years ago. Particularly we need to make every effort to strengthen democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as they are so closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing with peace and security in Europe. I do hope that the Human Dimension Implementation meeting will bring us closer to that end.

I wish you an interesting and inspiring discussion.

Thank you very much for your attention.