

**Address by
Mr. Bogusław Winid
Under-Secretary of State
in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland
at the Opening Session
of the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
(Warsaw, September 23, 2013)**

Mister Chairman,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- I have great pleasure to welcome you, on behalf of Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski, to the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw. I am very pleased to welcome Mr. Mehmet Sevki Kulkuloglu from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatovic, Special EU Representative, Mr. Lambrinidis, Ambassador Prokopchuk, representing Ukrainian Chairmanship in Office and Conflict Prevention Centre Director, Ambassador Kobieracki. I am also particularly glad that one of our guests today is Ms. Astrid Thors, the newly appointed High Commissioner on National Minorities. Ms. Thors, please accept my wishes of every success in carrying out your difficult and responsible mission.
- Let me also thank the current Ukrainian OSCE Chairmanship. You've made a great job preparing this year's HDIM, and I appreciate your commitment to making sure the upcoming Ministerial Council in Kiev achieves good results and makes progress on the Helsinki +40 process. As usual, I would also like to thank the ODIHR Director, Ambassador Janez Lenarčič, and his team for their involvement in organizing our meeting and for the incessant efforts to assist OSCE states in implementing their commitments.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- There's no doubt that the Implementation Meeting remains central to the OSCE's work as an important mechanism for promoting democracy and human rights in the Euro-Atlantic and Euro-Asian area. This aspect of the Meeting is particularly important to Poland, which has undergone a successful political and social transformation in the last 25 years.
- An active participation of NGO representatives is a clear advantage of the human rights discussion that is held during OSCE human dimension meetings. Without NGOs, our debate would be incomplete, lacking an important perspective that helps assess the compliance with third basket obligations.
- We believe that in order to effectively promote democracy, the rule of law and human rights we need to use various mechanisms that are adjusted to a given country or geographic region. Therefore, Poland continues to actively promote efforts to strengthen democracy and respect for human rights, and seeks to optimize a wide range of instruments in this field. We believe that both formal tools, like the Council of Europe and the United Nations Human Rights Council, whose presidency Poland holds this year, and the less formal ones, such as the Community of Democracies and EU mechanisms, have an important role to play. As a EU Member State, Poland makes a special contribution to developing such mechanisms as the Eastern Partnership and the European Endowment for Democracy.
- In this context, let me mention one example of my country's involvement in promoting democracy and human rights, namely the periodic Warsaw Dialogue for Democracy, which started last year. This year's edition will be held in the second half of October and will focus on the impact new technologies have on developing democracy. The conference's conclusions will form an input to the World Forum for Democracy, which is organized by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in late autumn 2013.
- Coming back to the present-day condition of the OSCE human dimension, we should consider two worrying issues. On the one hand, there is a tendency - which is especially visible in the human dimension's day-to-day work - to devote too much time and energy to discussing work plans, meeting agendas, and other formal and

procedural issues. This way we lose time that would be better spent on in-depth discussions. On the other hand, the dynamics and effects of our debates are far from satisfying. For quite some time now, the OSCE participating states have reached no consensus on specific third basket decisions, nor on the direction that the Organization's further work should take in this area. It is clear that this negative trend can only be reversed if we are mutually open to dialogue and show willingness to look critically at human rights situations in our own countries.

- The violation of fundamental freedoms in the OSCE area continues to pose a problem. We need to clearly and frankly tell ourselves that the freedom of association, assembly, and expression - realized also through modern communication technologies, as well as the right to a fair trial, are all too often violated, and that improvements in this area are much needed.
- During nearly 40 years of its activity, the OSCE has created important institutions that help countries meet their commitments in the human dimension, and has developed many useful mechanisms to that end, including the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. We should make every effort so that our accomplishments are not lost and contribute to strengthening mutual trust and security in the OSCE area.
- I wish you an interesting and inspiring discussion.
- Thank you very much for your attention.