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Opening Statement
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and Human Rights (ODIHR)

**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, 19 September 2005**



Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 10th HDIM in an anniversary year

I very warmly welcome you here in Warsaw, at the 10th Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in a year when we have also been celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, as well as 15 years of the Copenhagen Document and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. I could add a number of other anniversaries, but I would just like to mention one, namely the 25th anniversary of the Solidarity Movement in Poland, which was remembered in this very room exactly two weeks ago. The speeches and presentations made there – ranging from the role of the Final Act for change in Europe to the identification of new threats to human rights – could all have fitted well into the Implementation Meeting as well. Let me add that I was particularly impressed by the speeches of the former and the outgoing Presidents of our host country, who were on opposing sides 25 years ago, but who both acknowledged the need for mutual respect and joint efforts to master the challenges of the future.

I believe this should also be a good guide for the OSCE at large. 30 years ago, the Final Act was concluded in a situation characterized by opposing blocs, and no one in East or West could have foreseen the effect the Helsinki Accord would eventually have. It took the courage and determination of people like Ludmila Alexejeva – whom I herewith welcome warmly as our keynote speaker – defying oppression and intimidation to hold their governments accountable, and to take them at their word. Thirty years later, former opponents have become partners or even allies. They can look back together at successes and failures; they are also convinced of the need to join together in facing the challenges of our age. This Implementation Meeting serves this very purpose, namely to be frank and open about successes and failures across our region, but also to work together to identify ways and means to provide better human security for all in the region.

Let me also welcome our Chairman-in-Office, represented today by Ambassador Boris Frlec; Minister Piotr Switalski, representing our host country; the new OSCE Secretary General, Ambassador Marc Perrin de Brichambaut; and the Heads of the other two OSCE Institutions, Ambassador Rolf Ekeus, the High Commissioner for National Minorities, and Miklos Haraszti, the Representative for the Freedom of the Media.

I would also like to extend a special welcome to all other high-level representatives from participating States, especially those who have come here from their capitals from all over the world, from Canada to Kazakhstan. This again proves to me the relevance and attractiveness of this meeting. For us it is the highlight of our year, and I am looking forward to this HDIM being at least as successful as last year's. Participation is high, especially from NGOs from across the region, whom I invite to engage actively and in a constructive manner. Openness and criticism are essential for making this exercise meaningful, but criticism should not become an end in itself – rather it risks, if

exaggerated, meeting deaf ears and closed doors. And this, I guess, is not limited to NGOs. I would also like to thank all participants who organize side events, of which I believe we have a record number this year. We have always had the feedback from participants that these form an essential part of the HDIM and are, as it were, the 'salt in the menu'.

The participation of non-governmental organizations in OSCE discussions has just been identified as one of the important elements for improving the effectiveness of the OSCE in a meeting held in the Hofburg ten days ago, which was held under the auspices of the International Helsinki Federation and the Netherlands Helsinki Committee. At the HDIM and the other human dimension meetings, this is since long established practice. I hope that with an establishment of other new fora for human dimension work in the OSCE, this achievement can be further reinforced.

This year we hold the HDIM under slightly modified modalities, as Delegations felt that the meeting could still be improved in terms of its structural set up. We therefore have mixed up what we used to call the first and the second week – with an enhanced focus on thematic clusters of discussions. We combine the review of implementation of commitments with the more forward-looking approach. Hence, we have two days with a specifically selected topic already in the first week, namely “The situation of the media in the OSCE region and the role of State and non-State actors in promoting media freedom” on Wednesday, and “Methods to prevent and combat torture” on Thursday.

Next week, we will again start with a day focusing on human dimension activities, including projects, for which we expect a good participation from our colleagues in the field. That day should also serve as a good illustration of the broad range of concrete activities in assisting participating States towards implementing their commitments effectively. In the second half of next week, we will have the opportunity to concentrate again on an area of special focus since the last two years, including with a special day on “Tolerance and Non-Discrimination” on Thursday.

In the course of our discussions over the coming two weeks, we will also be able to examine the concrete follow up from the most recent Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings since the last HDIM, namely the SHDM on Internally Displaced Persons late last year, as well as the April SHDM on Challenges of Elections Technologies and Procedures, and the July SHDM on Human Rights and the Fight Against Terrorism. Certainly, we will also look at the outcome of the various meetings on Migration and Integration, a Chairmanship priority, in particular the Human Dimension Seminar on this issue which we held here in Warsaw in May.

Overall, the Meeting is also providing all of you with an opportunity to inform yourselves about the ODIHR work, to provide us with your comments and feedback, and to identify together with us possible future activities.

The human dimension remains at the core of the OSCE's comprehensive security concept

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the last months the various aspects of reform and efforts to strengthen this Organization were discussed, most recently at the High Level Consultations in Vienna last week. Together with my staff, I also had the honour to brief the Panel of Eminent Persons when it convened in Warsaw before the summer, and I am pleased that a number of our suggestions found their way into the *Common Purpose* report and its recommendations. I would therefore mention only one element, which I consider of particular relevance, not just for the ODIHR and the human dimension but in fact our entire organization.

We have heard a number of proposals on the bureaucratic reorganization of the institutional structure of the OSCE. The ODIHR is certainly interested in improving operational capacities, cooperation and coordination internally as well as with our partners inside and outside the organization. Under my leadership, the ODIHR has gone through a period of thorough reform, which has resulted in a more coherent structure, improved management and administration, longer-term programming, increased transparency and accountability. We have also strengthened communication with Delegations, field operations and other relevant partners.

As we have seen with our own restructuring, change is never easy, although it is also necessary to preserve what is good. I would, however, stress that I would see a danger for this Organization if it becomes permanently tied down with reshuffling of the bureaucratic boxes, or if it succumbs to the temptation of over-centralization, which may look nice on paper but risks losing the flexibility and operational speed which the OSCE has become known for, or if 'reform' becomes a permanent state of affairs which would risk making the OSCE inward-looking and focused on structures rather than content. I thank Ambassador Davidson, the Head of the OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for recently reminding us, in this context, of the rule that "form follows function". This is precisely what should guide us in the OSCE at large, but also here at the HDIM.

It is the content that matters.

This has been the nature of the OSCE throughout its thirty years of success. I hope we can get through the reform debate with further improved procedures and practices, but I also hope we can get through it. There is a lot of work out there, throughout our region. I expect this Meeting to identify much of these concrete needs. I would in particular mention the numerous frozen or forgotten conflicts in our region, which still generate far too much pain and suffering for OSCE citizens. I would also point to all the areas where the OSCE is the instrument of choice of the international community, which can provide early warning and conflict prevention. And there are of course all other challenges related to the effective enjoyment of human rights, to the rule of law, the credibility of democratic institutions, and the need to preserve harmony and solidarity in our increasingly diverse societies. There is the need to specially protect the weak, victims of

trafficking, minorities, Roma and Sinti, the millions of marginalized in our societies. Responding to these challenges cannot await the moment when the Organization has designed its perfect master plan, has brought its financial efficiency to perfection, or has ensured overall consensus on every little project, on every little activity.

The responsibility to protect

The ODIHR, as I have said, has been open for change and will continue to engage in reform efforts. It will continue to strive to be an attentive and strong partner to address these and other challenges effectively. Effective partnerships necessitate dialogue, cooperation, and political will, on all sides. I plead with you that we further strengthen this Organization, and all its other constituting elements, including my Institution, to be a strong partner, for governments, civil society, and each other. We can, and must, make a decisive contribution to improved human security. We share a joint responsibility, a responsibility which is currently discussed at another anniversary assembly, that of the United Nations: The responsibility to protect. In the OSCE, we share this responsibility already. I would hope that this year's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting can live up to this expectation. We have an excellent basis – a comprehensive range of commitments, by all 55 participating States. The latest collection of commitments for the human dimension we are publishing today, on the occasion of the anniversaries of our organization. They fill two volumes. They need to be brought to life, every day.

Thank you.