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461st Session of the Permanent Council
Vienna, 17 July 2003



The ODIHR's Role and Objectives

At last month's Annual Security Review Conference, the ODIHR had the opportunity to underline its importance as a security institution: established in an effort to jointly build and strengthen democratic states and engage in co-operation that enhances the rights and freedoms of the individual. The underlying philosophy of pursuing these goals is that democracy and the protection of human rights are the best guarantee for creating inclusive and open societies, thereby preventing possible human security threats from emerging or from causing harm to the stability of the OSCE area.

The Annual Security Review Conference discussed the new threats we face at the dawn of the 21st century. These threats demand a comprehensive approach from the OSCE and its participating States, and the ODIHR is directly called upon to develop strategies and options. Our joint combat of terrorism is a case in point. Terrorism poses one of the gravest threats we face. It is a threat to the most fundamental human right: the right to life. It is an attack on the very fabric of our society, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. All States have an obligation to prevent and combat terrorism and violent extremism. Responding to terrorism requires States to react to both the consequences and causes of the problem. However, it is imperative that we always remain aware of the inherent risk involved in fighting terrorism, that is, the risk of undermining the very basis of democracy by measures that have been actually designed for its defence.

The widespread occurrence of intolerance and discrimination based on ethnic, racial, religious and other criteria is another such common concern that requires particular attention from the ODIHR. This is how we see our role: to address these issues on your behalf, to assist the participating States in fulfilling their primary roles in protecting their citizens, and to help them not lose sight of the importance of keeping the right balance, that is, not to act against the rule of law and against the letter and spirit of our common commitments.

We will meet again this afternoon for the **Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on the Freedom of Religion or Belief**. All OSCE participating States are committed to protect freedom of religion or belief, including the right to manifest one's religion or belief. However, adherents of religions or beliefs, especially members of minority groups, continue to experience difficulties in manifesting their religion or belief. Such

restrictions may be due to State legislation and policies, or they can stem from intolerance based on other, often majority, religions or beliefs.

Promoting freedom of religion or belief cannot therefore confine itself to scrutinizing laws and regulations, but it also entails tolerance, mutual understanding and inter-religious dialogue. The media has a powerful role, both positive and negative, in either exacerbating or ameliorating tensions flowing from intolerance and prejudice. We will be discussing these issues in detail during the three working sessions.

This meeting is very timely since almost all of the recommendations to the ODIHR at the 1999 SHDM on the same topic have been carried out, despite the lack of sufficient financial and human resources that the ODIHR has been faced with to carry out the work. However, we have been fortunate that we have been able to get the expert guidance of the members of the Advisory Panel on Freedom of Religion or Belief. The Panel has currently been meeting here in Vienna to examine how it might be reformed to function even more effectively in the future and to continue to provide the guidance necessary as our work in this area expands.

This meeting is only one of the elements of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to the issue of discrimination. This year's entire "package" of conferences and meetings on (i) Roma and Sinti; (ii) Anti-Semitism; (iii) Freedom of Religion; and (iv) Discrimination, Racism and Xenophobia will be discussed at the **Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**, which will take place in Warsaw on October 6-17. During the second week of the HDIM, the outcomes of these conferences will come together during a day of discussions that should be forward-looking and focused on finding solutions. We should come out with operational conclusions and concrete recommendations for both the participating States and for the OSCE as an organization, including its institutions and field missions.

In preparing this year's Implementation Meeting, we have been working in close co-ordination with the Chairmanship and delegations, as well as the institutions and field missions, all of which are invited to take an active role in making this meeting – the biggest and most important Human Dimension event of the year – successful and useful. All other events held earlier during the year feed into this larger joint objective. We must ensure that this meeting has a strategic focus: to advance the OSCE human dimension

agenda and to improve implementation by participating States of their commonly agreed human dimension commitments.

For the human dimension of the OSCE, all these meetings are the road to Maastricht, where you should be able to present the Ministers a comprehensive package of options to consider. I would therefore strongly encourage the OSCE participating States to be represented at an appropriately high level and to include experts in the delegations.

I would also like to draw your attention to the need for adequate resources in order to ensure participation of representatives from the so-called Recently Admitted Participating States (including government participants and NGOs). If resources are not made available, there might not be an adequate representation from some of the OSCE participating States. I recall in this context the repeated requests of the Secretary General to participating States for replenishing the Fund for Fostering the Integration of Recently Admitted Participating States (the RAPS Fund), which has in the past proven to be an extremely useful funding mechanism.

The ODIHR's Enhanced Focus

Since my arrival at the ODIHR in March, I have focused particularly on three objectives: strengthening leadership and focus for the Office, enhancing the Office's capacity to fulfill its mandate, and developing the outreach to all our partners.

I have started a process to consolidate the working basis for the ODIHR and to put the many activities undertaken by the Office in a broader strategic perspective. Much of this is reflected in the programme outline for 2004, which was presented by my First Deputy at last week's PrepCom. The past years have seen a considerable growth of the ODIHR's work, involving a substantial increase in the number of activities, as well as in the number of people employed. In order to allow the ODIHR to develop a more strategic focus for its activities, without losing its flexibility, the operations of the ODIHR must be set on a sound administrative basis, involving the regularization of a number of posts and the consolidation of the Office structure.

In response to demands from participating States, our activities continue to expand across our comprehensive human dimension mandate and in ever-wider areas of the OSCE region. Implementing these activities requires increased resources, both in cash and in personnel, but we should not rely exclusively on extra-budgetary contributions – secondments or donations – to pay for projects, as they are volatile and do not always allow for sound programme management.

The ODIHR's activities are a core responsibility of the Organization in one of its three dimensions, and they should be covered in the core budget, at least in certain measure. The ODIHR will therefore seek basic budget funding for project activities in democratization and human rights, as we already receive funding for elections-related activities. The new thematic coherence has been appreciated by delegations, and I am very grateful for the positive feedback we have received in this regard.

At the same time, we have been working on developing strategic relationships with our main partners, field missions and participating States. The co-operation with the Chairmanship and the Secretariat (including the CPC) had been particularly important in this context, and it is my firm intention to develop this further. We will also increase our outreach to non-governmental organizations that share our goals and work in related fields.

Visits to Participating States

Many issues the ODIHR is dealing with are not confined to particular regions but are relevant to the entire OSCE area, e.g., trafficking in human beings, terrorism, intolerance, and election-related challenges. This has been reflected in our activities, and the ODIHR will continue to address human dimension issues throughout the whole OSCE region.

In the past months, I have spent quite some time visiting participating States to explore ways to further enhance existing cooperation. My travels have taken me, among others, to the Russian Federation, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Kosovo (Serbia and Montenegro) and most recently to Albania. Moreover, I will be travelling on to Armenia next week. Many of these countries are facing a key period in their democratic consolidation.

The States in the South Caucasus region are currently going through a cycle of important elections. Central Asia has become an area of strategic importance for the entire OSCE, where we hope to be able to continue to actively assist governments to comply with their commitments. In South-Eastern Europe, even though much remains to be done, there is a trend towards fundamentally changing the nature of the international involvement in the region. This is done in anticipation of a greater EU role, which also changes the perspective in which the OSCE's involvement there should be viewed. The ODIHR stands ready to develop joint OSCE strategies for the region in light of the encouraging developments and would welcome any ideas for its specific involvement in this regard.

I plan to visit more participating States in the course of this year, in particular in Central and Eastern Europe, including participating States that are about to become members of the European Union. I hope that I will be able to visit States in Western Europe and also in North America, as States in that region also deserve their fair attention from my Office.

I would also like to welcome the increasing number of visiting delegations to our Office; in the last few months, we have had visitors from the Netherlands, Norway, Canada, the USA, Sweden, Switzerland, and the European Commission, as well as from the Secretariat and from field missions. I want to encourage such visits, as they allow the ODIHR to present in detail our activities that are of particular interest to delegations.

Activities

Allow me to highlight some of the key activities we have undertaken since the Permanent Council was last briefed about the ODIHR's activities:

Elections

Since my last presentation here in March, the ODIHR has been involved in observing elections in Scotland, Wales, Armenia, Moldova and Montenegro. For this autumn, we are also facing an extremely busy election schedule, including parliamentary elections in Georgia and the Russian Federation, municipal elections in Albania, and presidential elections in Azerbaijan.

During my recent visit to Georgia, President Shevardnadze pointed out to me the importance of the upcoming parliamentary elections also with a view to other elections to be held in the future. I stressed that the responsibility for conducting elections lies with participating States and that ODIHR would therefore not be part of the Central Election Committee. However, my office stands ready to assist Georgia to the maximum of our possibilities, in their efforts to guarantee free and fair elections and particularly through the timely deployment of an Election Observation Mission.

Allow me at this point to underline that the ODIHR will be requiring considerable numbers of observers for these key elections. Let me therefore already now call upon delegations to stress to your capitals our reliance on substantial numbers of observers to be sent to these upcoming elections.

As part of our continuous efforts to improve our methodology, we are now more often conducting working visits during the early stages of election preparations. Such visits were made in advance of the elections in Albania, in Georgia and Azerbaijan and are planned before the elections in Uzbekistan in 2004. These newly emerging elements in the ODIHR election observation methodology provide new possibilities for a more comprehensive approach.

Ensuring a more systematic follow-up on the implementation of recommendations contained in ODIHR final reports – as agreed at Istanbul – has become one of our priorities. The importance of proper follow-up, with clear political support, has been demonstrated on a number of occasions and has led, for example, to the creation of a bipartisan committee on electoral reform in Albania and the removal of problematic elements in the election legislation of Serbia and Montenegro.

The ODIHR's election-related work has since long gone beyond the mere observation of elections. Only two weeks ago, the ODIHR presented a new comprehensive inventory of existing election-related standards to you: It is called "Existing Commitments for Democratic Elections in OSCE Participating States – A Progress Report". It refers to norms and principles, commitments and good practices contained in various international documents. Never before has such a compilation been put together, which should now benefit practitioners in the electoral field.

The first forum for domestic observer groups in Europe was held in Zagreb at the end of June, organized by ODIHR and the European Commission to fulfil a recommendation of the 2001 Human Dimension Seminar. It was attended by representatives of domestic observer groups from around 30 participating States, making it the largest meeting of its kind ever held in Europe. This forum built on previous ODIHR work to strengthen the capacity of domestic observer groups, including the preparation of a handbook, which was presented at the meeting. The forum proved to be extremely useful and was highly appreciated by participants as a significant step towards further strengthening the capacity and networking of domestic groups in the OSCE region.

Through the year, we have been working on a new, fourth edition of the ODIHR Election Observation Handbook (the so-called "Blue Book"); its last edition was published in April 1999. The new edition will include elements of the refined and improved ODIHR election observation methodology, such as systematic election law reviews preceding the holding of elections, early working visits during the early stages of election preparations, the developing methodology on monitoring the media during elections, monitoring of the participation of women and of national minorities, and the translation of the final report into national languages. We plan to finalize this work and launch the new edition by the end of the year.

Democratization

One of the key areas of work for our democratization programme is **rule of law** development. By definition, rule of law development work is long-term work. We therefore urge more consistency and longer-term views by those nations that are generous in financially supporting rule of law development work for transition nations in the OSCE region.

Recognizing the long-term nature of rule of law development, the ODIHR remains committed to addressing the lack of progress in many key areas, and countries, in the OSCE region. **Torture** remains a serious problem. Every year, people die in the OSCE region because they are tortured to death. All too often torture is used as the main technique of criminal investigation, to extract confessions. All too often police are encouraged in this practice due to the way rewards and promotions are structured. Linking promotions and pay increases of police officers and investigators to numbers of “crimes solved” helps to encourage this practice. In the OSCE region, we are committed to working together towards the eradication of torture.

Let me cite one example of progress in the area of rule of law reform in one OSCE participating State. Last year, a new Criminal Procedure Code came into effect that should radically change the way that criminal cases are conducted in the Russian Federation. This development is having very real and positive influences in a number of countries of the OSCE region. Building on this positive example, we at the ODIHR continue to use Russian lawyers, law professors, judges and prosecutors as experts in a number of our programmes, including programmes aimed at reform of the criminal justice system.

However, real progress in criminal justice reform must continue. In too many States in the OSCE region, the judiciary is not independent, the police and prosecutors have disproportionate power, and defence attorneys are prevented from doing what is necessary to provide an adequate defence for their clients.

The ODIHR has continued to seek to establish a constructive dialogue, where needed, between **non-governmental organizations (NGOs)** and government or state representatives. In post-conflict areas, the ODIHR brings together actors from the different parties involved in order to support reconciliation efforts. In view of promoting civil society, the ODIHR keeps a close eye on any development in the field of NGO legislation that might hamper the healthy growth of the civil society sector and facilitates the participation of NGOs in major OSCE events such as Review Conferences or Human Dimension Meetings and Seminars.

The ODIHR’s attention to NGOs is of a high value in reaching out to communities and in our efforts to meet authentic needs at the very grass-

roots level. In a related way, the ODIHR is now concentrating its efforts upon contributing towards enhancing democratic governance, encouraging citizen participation in local decision-making, while keeping an active role in building bridges between governments and the NGO communities. Building upon its commitment towards ensuring the development of a healthy civil society based on the basic freedoms of association and of assembly, the ODIHR is keen to promote the interaction between formal institutions and all civil society actors.

As part of our **anti-trafficking** activities, we implement a wide range of projects and assist OSCE participating States in developing anti-trafficking legislation and national referral mechanisms to improve victim and witness protection. The ODIHR Anti-Trafficking Unit also provides expertise to field missions and acts as a clearing house. Regionally, we aim at focusing on countries of origin, as well as on countries of transit and destination, East and West. The ODIHR only recently hosted an assessment meeting with non-governmental organizations from five selected EU member states, where NGO experts discussed significant differences and shortcomings on victims' rights and support structures within EU member states. A report from this meeting will be available soon.

The Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings that you will adopt will lead to an increased level of activity in the ODIHR's anti-trafficking programme. In order to be able to respond to the requests as set out in the Draft Action Plan in a responsible and professional manner, the ODIHR appeals to the delegations of all OSCE participating States to provide sufficient human and financial resources in this endeavour.

I have sometimes been asked why it makes sense to have a specialized Anti-Trafficking Unit at the ODIHR. I want to make it very clear that the work of the Anti-Trafficking Unit is an integral part of the ODIHR's programmes and that it draws from, and feeds back into, all of the ODIHR's democratization and human rights programmes, as well as our special programme on Roma and Sinti. Let me give you one example from my recent trip to Albania, where I was able to acknowledge promising political will and recent progress and was briefed about the encouraging interaction between government, civil society and international organizations in the fight against trafficking in human beings. I am proud that the ODIHR played a key role in bringing this all about.

During my discussions with the relevant counterparts, Minister Valentina Leskaj and Minister Blendi Klosi, I was particularly impressed by the clear understanding that prevention and reintegration work in the anti-trafficking field needs to be closely linked to, and jointly addressed with, elaborating creative strategies to enhance gender equality and job-market development.

Through the ODIHR Anti-Trafficking Project Fund, my Office is supporting the OSCE Presence in carrying out one awareness-raising and one direct assistance project. Both projects are built on close co-operation between governmental and non-governmental partners, the OSCE Presence in Albania and the ODIHR. The co-operation between State authorities and civil society in particular is vital for the development of comprehensive anti-trafficking and gender-equality strategies based on human rights principles. I am glad to see that we, together, were able to make significant progress happen in the last years, and I look forward to continuing our good co-operation.

In the field of **migration**, the ODIHR has continued work on freedom of choice of place of residence. The purpose is to assist States to create legal frameworks for replacing the Soviet-era *propiska* system with modern population registration systems. We have already had successful co-operation with Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, and Ukraine. We were also pleased to begin co-operation on this issue with Belarus. A co-operative spirit was shown by the Belarusian authorities during the seminar on this issue held on July 7 in Minsk, and we are looking forward to expanding this co-operation, as well as to a similar spirit in other areas.

The overall work on this issue, initiated by the ODIHR some years ago, is now starting to bear fruit and is beginning to be felt in other contexts. For example, recent election observation missions to Armenia noted improvement in voter registers. This is a direct result of Armenia's co-operation with the ODIHR on civil registration. This work, while far from complete, is a credit to the central and local authorities of Armenia, as well as to its civil society for persevering in its co-operation with the ODIHR on a very complex human dimension issue.

The Migration Unit, jointly with its partners, the IOM and the Bishkek-based Regional Center for Migration and Refugee Issues, held a round-table in Kyrgyzstan at the end of June on the legal status of migrant workers in countries of Central Asia and in the Russian Federation. High-level

delegations from Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan held a candid exchange of views and ideas at this event, which also served as preparation to the special session on migrant workers scheduled to take place during the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting.

Let me give you another very practical example that illustrates the way in which ODIHR can, I believe, make a difference in implementing human dimension commitments: The ODIHR is about to complete a project where 15 Azeri Border Service officers received 10 months of training in the Polish Border Service Academy. To share the experiences and lessons learned during this project, as well as to explore possibilities of future co-operation on border management, an international conference that brought together participants from Central Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia was held earlier this week in Baku.

We believe that humane treatment of migrants is an integral part of combating chauvinism, intolerance and xenophobia. Societies that treat migrants humanely are inherently strong, while those that do not are often fragile. The ODIHR assists States to create legal and institutional frameworks that enable humane treatment of migrants. For example, together with the IOM and an outstanding local NGO, the Kazakh International Bureau for Human Rights, we are continuing to provide legal assistance in Kazakhstan.

Particular attention is given to **gender** issues, as this year's ODIHR Human Dimension Seminar was devoted to "Women's Participation in Public and Economic Life." It was a very successful event, particularly in light of the strong and viable NGO participation and their contributions to the working groups of the seminar. Overall, the Seminar had 204 participants, including 84 delegates from 38 OSCE participating States.

It should be underlined that the participation of women in public and economic life was not viewed in isolation but in the context of democratic and economic processes that are essential to comprehensive security. The Seminar's discussions also focussed on ways to improve the efficiency of mechanisms for human rights protection of women and for promoting gender equality throughout the OSCE region.

The seminar identified a number of key recommendations and main steps for action. For the OSCE in particular, the Seminar called for action in

enhancing the role of the OSCE as an organization that effectively fulfils, advocates and protects gender equality while also promoting international co-operation. The consolidated summary of the seminar will be distributed next week.

To promote gender equality in practice, the ODIHR is currently implementing a number of gender programmes concentrating on Central Asian and South Caucasus States. I would particularly like to mention the programme on Prevention of Violence Against Women in the South Caucasus, which brings together government and NGOs, as well as international organizations.

The ODIHR notes with satisfaction that women's organizations are increasingly taking action to advocate for women's rights and promote the participation of women in leadership positions and politics. These NGOs have an essential role in democratization and need to be included and supported where possible.

With the aim of enhancing the capacity to address the full range of its fields of activity, three years ago the ODIHR launched a **legislative database** (*legislationline.org*) that contains domestic and international legislation on no fewer than thirteen human dimension topics. Since then, this database has grown and matured thanks to the continued generosity from donors, in particular the European Commission. Meant as a tool for law reform and lawmakers, it has in the meantime far exceeded initial expectations. We have reports of various instances where lawmakers, especially in South-Eastern Europe, have relied on this resource for their legislative work. This has been the case particularly with regard to the fight against human trafficking, electoral matters, gender issues and NGO-related legislation. There have been many more cases where NGOs, law professionals and other international organizations have made use of the database for their own work and agendas. *Legislationline* has grown into a reference tool for a wide variety of purposes. Its innovative methodology has now been extended to the systematic collection and review of legislation relevant to the fight against terrorism, with emphasis on the balancing of combating terrorism and protecting human rights. We have also taken further steps towards supplementing our work on Roma and Sinti issues by requesting your co-operation for the collection and analysis of a wide spectrum of legal acts.

The ODIHR not only intends to continue this project even beyond its present time limits – under the current ODIHR-EC joint programme – but is also considering enhancing the effort by providing broader legislative support for prompt and sound legal reaction.

In the **Balkans**, the ODIHR is active in all its areas of expertise. In addition, the ODIHR has developed a successful process of bringing together the experiences of OSCE field operations in this region with a view to exchanging best practices and assisting the States in that region to develop and strengthen regional co-operation themselves. The ODIHR has focused on parliamentary co-operation, prison reform, civil society dialogue and networks, local government, and youth activities as these offered themselves for a specific regional human dimension perspective where the ODIHR's initiative or contribution was a significant factor.

Human Rights

With the development of the Monitoring Unit into a proper Human Rights Section, the human rights work of the ODIHR has become more focused. We will use our human rights resources to enhance other important areas such as human rights training, support to smaller missions, and human rights assessments. Our research, review and assessment capacity needs to be strengthened, and so does our co-operation with other international organizations in this field, such as the UNHCHR and the Council of Europe.

One of the most crucial areas within our new human rights programme will be human rights training. A new handbook for missions will be published by the ODIHR in the fall containing guidelines on how to deal with individual human rights complaints. This handbook has a very practical approach and treats, *inter alia*, issues such as how to interview a complainant, standardized reception of such complaints, etc. Based on this handbook, a number of training sessions are also foreseen – the first is planned for the Central Asian field offices in September. These training sessions will be carried out in co-operation with the Training Unit in the Secretariat, as well as with the training co-ordinators in the respective field operations.

At the same time, the ODIHR will upgrade its co-operation with NGOs on human rights training. We will develop our own capacity and competence to provide the training but will also increase our contacts with missions and the

real human rights contexts in the respective countries. As we increase our activities on human rights, we will also look closer at human rights education.

One of the core elements of the ODIHR's human rights programme is the area of **human rights and terrorism**, as mandated by Bucharest and Bishkek. The ODIHR is working on this issue through three distinct programme areas, co-ordinated by the ODIHR's Co-ordinator on Anti-Terrorism Issues, within the Human Rights Section:

1. Analysis of human rights protection in measures against terrorism – This work is being conducted to ensure the appropriate checks and balances are in place regarding the conformity of anti-terrorism measures with international law, in particular human rights law. This analysis also assists in developing our legislative assistance work and other programme activities.
2. Terrorism Prevention Programme – This work is being carried out across a broad range of the tasks in the ODIHR's core mandate, including the promotion of human dimension commitments in the area of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.
3. Technical Assistance Programme – The bulk of the assistance is carried out in co-operation with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime's Global Programme Against Terrorism, in co-ordination with the Secretariat's Anti-Terrorism Unit. So far, projects have been implemented supporting the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1373 in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. A regional workshop for Central Asia on implementation of the Resolution was also held in February 2003. We are planning additional workshops in the coming months and welcome requests for assistance from participating States in this area.

The UN Counter-Terrorism Committee is the body that monitors implementation of Resolution 1373. It provides no direct technical assistance and has no mandate to monitor compliance with human rights standards. The ODIHR, directly and through the ATU, has developed close working ties with the CTC, which in turn encourages regional organizations to provide technical assistance and facilitate access to expertise. The OSCE, and in particular the ODIHR, is currently engaged in direct technical

assistance activities to support States in their measures to prevent and combat terrorism in accordance with international human rights law. The UN CTC has participated in all technical-assistance activities carried out by the ODIHR.

In terms of co-ordination, it is vital that all OSCE anti-terrorism activities are well co-ordinated. The ODIHR and the Action Against Terrorism Unit in the OSCE Secretariat enjoy a close working relationship, collaborate on project implementation, co-ordinate activities and conduct a regular information exchange.

Roma and Sinti

The human rights situation of **Roma and Sinti** remains extremely unsatisfactory in many OSCE countries. That is why the ODIHR devotes a special programme to the situation of this group. The ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues continues its efforts to bring all relevant actors together and find durable solutions – be it at the local, national or international level. The Contact Point can react flexibly to emerging crises and has in many cases mediated on the ground to dissolve tensions between Roma and non-Roma populations or the local authorities.

The Contact Point is also actively involved in international efforts to improve the situation of Roma, most importantly, through the OSCE Action Plan for Roma and Sinti, which is being elaborated under the able chairmanship of our colleague Ambassador Bota. It is also systematically involved in activities conducted by the European Commission, the Council of Europe, and the Stability Pact. The Contact Point is also involved in the preparations for a longer-term international strategy for improving the inclusion of Roma in European societies, as will be the objective of the Decade of Roma Inclusion recently announced.

With our continuous efforts in these areas, the ODIHR seeks to play its own part in what you have committed yourselves to over the almost thirty years of developing this great organization: promoting security through human rights and enabling our citizens through free and democratic elections and the establishment of democratic institutions.

In doing so, we seek permanent contact with you, and we depend on your co-operation and goodwill. Concretely, we regularly ask participating States to provide us with information concerning particular areas of interest that have an importance for the fulfillment of our commitments. Recently, the ODIHR requested the co-operation of delegations with regard to anti-terrorism measures, the legislative framework relating to Roma and Sinti and the death penalty. Your co-operation on these requests is very important to us and is highly appreciated.

As part of our preparations for the HDIM, the ODIHR Human Rights Section is carrying out research for the annual publication on the use of the death penalty in the OSCE region. In this regard, I sent the concerned delegations a letter earlier this week asking for information and statistics on the use of the death penalty over the past year. This letter was sent on the basis of the commitment in the Copenhagen Document of 1990 to make information on the use of the death penalty available.

I am very much looking forward to continue receiving your responses.