



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

PRESENTATION OF THE PROGRAM AND PRIORITIES OF HUMAN DIMENSION COMMITTEE IN 2015

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 12 February 2015

Mr Chairman,

Thank you for this opportunity to outline the program and priorities of the Human Dimension Committee in 2015. I shall make my presentation brief and I look forward to comments from colleagues, which I will be happy to respond to.

Distinguished colleagues,

We circulated earlier this week the draft program of the committee, reflecting the main topics for the fourteen ordinary meetings planned for this year.

The main topics include freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of religion or belief and freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.

It includes tolerance and non-discrimination, national minorities, national human rights institutions, administration of justice and independent judiciary, gender, torture, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, death penalty, trafficking, and economic, social and cultural rights.

To introduce the different main topics we are in the process of inviting guest speakers, including UN special rapporteurs. We will of course draw upon prominent representatives of our own organization.

We will follow up the practice from previous years of inviting the Chair of the Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions to update us on the activities of their committee.

The program is tentative. Much work remains before we can finalize the agenda of the individual meetings.

Colleagues,

The main topics reflect the priorities of the Serbian Chairmanship, including administration of justice, independent judiciary, and national human rights institutions.

The list also includes priorities of my own country. In a white paper to parliament on human rights, published last December, the Norwegian government underlined that the two categories of human rights – civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights – are mutually reinforcing and that both categories therefore must be given priority. This has motivated me to include economic, social and cultural rights in the 2015 program.

We have also taken on board inputs we received during informal consultations with participating States last month.

Colleagues,

It will not come as a surprise that few of you will find *all* your priorities included. But all will recognize priorities that are key to the OSCE – to all 57 – and therefore should be on the program every year.

I am confident that you will agree that this program focuses on issues that are of critical importance to our efforts to strengthen the security and stability in the OSCE area.

Allow me to point out that the priorities of the committee should be seen in light of the overall human dimension work program of the Chairmanship. Issues not included in the work program of the Committee, may very well be included in one of the Human Dimension events, or in special HDC meetings we plan to organize, devoted to hate crimes and IDPs.

I should add that we will invite committee members to a retreat in April. Human Dimension reform and possible deliverables for the Belgrade Ministerial are among the topics we plan to discuss at the retreat.

Dear colleagues,

Several topics on the OSCE agenda are cross-dimensional. And there are topics that should not be discussed without taking into consideration the OSCE comprehensive approach to security. My colleagues, the Chairs of the two other committees, have already mentioned that we will reflect this by organizing joint meetings.

I will in particular draw your attention to the meeting on terrorism and human rights, tentatively planned for June. We have invited Mr Ben Emmerson, UN Special Rapporteur on Promotion and Protection of human rights while countering terrorism, to make the main presentation. His presentation will be followed by presentations by a panel of experts focusing on security, financial and human rights aspects related to combatting terrorism.

In December, after the Belgrade Ministerial, we will invite to a joint second and third dimension committees meeting devoted to a topic that so far has received limited attention in the OSCE, namely business and human rights. I have asked my colleagues in Oslo and in Geneva to assist us in preparing this meeting.

Chairman, colleagues,

Let me now turn to voluntary reports by participating States on implementation of human dimension commitments and on follow-up of recommendations. Last year we had 12 such reports. This year I hope to have at least one report in every ordinary committee meeting. I take this opportunity to encourage you to help me fulfill this ambition. Voluntary reports represent an effective way of sharing best practices and they contribute to strengthening the implementation of our commitments.

My final point, Mr Chairman, is the following: The only way an intergovernmental organization can remain relevant is to engage with the society outside our own closed circles. I will therefore continue inviting representatives of civil society to contribute to our discussions.

This, Mr Chairman, concludes my presentation.