



Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 21st September to 2nd October 2015

Opening Session

Warsaw, 21 September 2015

Statement of Switzerland

Excellencies, dear colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the coming two weeks we will have the opportunity to discuss the progress made by our governments in implementing our human dimension commitments. Even more important, our discussions will also help us to identify gaps of implementation. A credible way for each participating State to do this is to analyze its own achievements and shortcomings before pointing fingers at others. By introducing the OSCE Chairmanship self-evaluation last year, Switzerland and Serbia created a new tool in the OSCE to do exactly that.

In close collaboration with civil society, Switzerland has analyzed the level of implementation of our commitments in the following 5 areas: election observation, tolerance and non-discrimination, freedom of expression and assembly, combating trafficking in human beings and gender equality. The self-evaluation not only helped us to assess our progress, but also to identify areas where further action is needed. We are happy to see that the Serbian Chairmanship and Germany, as incoming Chair, are following this initiative.



Excellencies, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

The active participation of non-governmental organizations at the HDIM adds great value to our discussions. On the one hand, civil society organizations are monitors of the level of adherence to human rights standards, and on the other hand, they are alarm-bells, which reveal human rights violations. Our societies can only benefit from their vigilant eyes and critical voices. We welcome their participation and look forward to engaging in fruitful discussions with them.

Unfortunately, recent developments show that the space in public life for active and independent civil society organizations is shrinking in many OSCE participating States. We are observing with great concern increasing restrictions towards representatives of the civil society, human rights defenders and journalists. These negative trends not only question the compliance with our common commitments, but also undermine the very nature of democracy.

We welcome the tireless efforts of the OSCE Executive Structures, Institutions and Field Operations, to counter these negative trends in the OSCE region. The work of ODIHR, of the Representative on Freedom of the Media, of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and of the Field Operations is, against that backdrop, more important than ever. Switzerland will continue to support them in their important tasks.



Excellencies, dear colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is high time to reinforce our commitments in order to strengthen human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the OSCE region. We can only be successful if we extend our human dimension commitments to the new challenges which we face, such as refugee migration or youth and violent extremism. Concerning refugee migration, the OSCE and its Field Operations must do everything possible to support efforts of local authorities and UNHCR's protection activities, especially in transit countries. Concerning youth and violent extremism, we welcome the initiative of the Serbian Chairmanship to continue last year's endeavors to elaborate an Action Plan on Youth and Security.

At the same time, we need to reinforce our existing commitments in already well-known issues like the prevention of torture, gender equality, safety of journalists and national human rights institutions. Switzerland will support the Serbian Chairmanship in its engagement to bring to adoption decisions on these topics at the Ministerial Council in Belgrade.

To conclude, I wish us all a fruitful, frank and constructive exchange in the coming two weeks.

Thank you for your attention.