

20th HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

19 September 2016

Warsaw



**Opening remarks by
Michael Georg Link**

Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Check against delivery!

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honor and a true privilege to welcome you all to the opening of the 20th 2014 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting here in Warsaw, the year ODIHR marks its 25th Anniversary.

Let me start by welcoming our very distinguished speakers, thanking them for accepting our invitation and being able to join us this morning.

For opening remarks, we are privileged to have our Chairperson in Office, the Foreign Minister of Germany Frank-Walter Steinmeier with us, underlining also his personal commitment to the human dimension in a time of great challenges to our common security.

We are equally privileged to also have with us the distinguished Foreign Minister of Poland, Witold Waszczykowski, representing our generous host country and close partner for our Human Dimension Implementation Meetings and ODIHR for more than two decades.

They are followed by Her Excellency Christine Muttonen, the President of the OSCE's Parliamentary Assembly, and the elected representatives of more than a billion people across the vast Northern Hemisphere.

Every year we explore new ways of making HDIM more relevant, inclusive and engaging. This year is no exception as we certainly can look forward to a stimulating high-level debate as part of the opening session. Moderated by the prominent journalist Ms Annabelle Chapman, we are all honoured to have the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr Nils Muiznieks, the Executive Director of Human Rights Watch, Mr Kenneth Roth and

our very own OSCE Representative on Freedom of Media, Ms Dunja Mijatovic share their valuable insights and reflections over “Democracy and Human Rights in the OSCE Space 25 years after the Charter of Paris for a New Europe”.

After the debate we shall look forward to welcoming remarks also from Ambassador Paul Bekkers, the Director of the Office of Secretary General Lamberto Zannier, before the statements from our participating States.

Allow me now to yet again warmly welcome all representatives from the participating States, from OSCE executive structures, from the media, and, very importantly, from civil society. Last but not least I would like to welcome all those who are with us through the live stream on the OSCE website.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I give the floor to our distinguished speakers, I would like to thank my esteemed predecessors who have traveled to Warsaw today to take part in celebrating the achievements of ODIHR over 25 years. They know as do I that none of those achievements would have been possible without the tireless efforts of the dedicated and committed staff of ODIHR, and the support from participating States that enables us to assist them back.

HDIM is a unique platform to reflect on historic achievements and landmark documents with a view to better inform our discussion on how to best address current and future challenges together. What makes HDIM and the OSCE's Human Dimension so unique can to a large extent be attributed to one seminal sentence that also turns 25 this year.

Namely, when the participating States met in Moscow in October 1991 they *“categorically and irrevocably declared that the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension of the OSCE are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned”*.

Without that one and truly remarkable sentence in Moscow 25 years ago, we would not be here today with this unique opportunity to discuss joint responses to common challenges for all our citizens. If anything, this is both the value and purpose of HDIM.

And then, Ladies and Gentlemen, without further ado, please join me in welcome our Chairperson in Office, His Excellency Frank-Walter Steinmeier. Your Excellency, the floor is yours.