

Report on the 20th Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

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Check Against Delivery

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here with you today, as I present to you my report on the 2016 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, which took place from 19 to 30 September in Warsaw. As per established practice, this presentation will be accompanied by a presentation of slides with facts, figures and photos from the meeting which you are able to see above your heads as I speak, as well as by the distribution of a written report, the “Consolidated Summary” of the meeting.

It is by now a good tradition to start this report with some figures and statistics. The two most important figures of this year were the numbers 25 and 20: As most of you certainly know, this year was marked by two very special anniversaries. We are celebrating the 25th anniversary of ODIHR on the one hand, as well as the 20th

anniversary of the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting on the other. As you can see in the first slide of the presentation, we have developed a dedicated logo to mark this special occasion.

Looking at the next slides, you will see that we have again been able to break new records of attendance and participation. I can report that this year we had a record number of 1502 participants. 472 of these represented delegations from 55 OSCE participating States, 14 came from our Partners for Co-operation, 129 participants joined us from OSCE institutions, field missions and executive structures, 32 were representatives of other international organizations and an impressive number 804 came from civil society organizations from all across the OSCE area.

Participants, all together, delivered 603 statements during all sessions and 190 ‘rights of reply’ statements. The most popular session, in terms of statements, was the working session 12 “Fundamental

freedoms II on Freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief” with 70 statements including statements and rights of reply.

92 side events were organized in the margins of this year’s HDIM, meant to highlight and address a wide range of human dimension topics. The side events provided opportunities for governments, international organizations and NGOs to present best practices, to brief on their activities and for more in-depth and focused discussions on various issues related to democracy and human rights.

They also allowed us to break out from the rigid protocol of the plenary sessions and have some more informal and lively debates. As you know, we as ODIHR have also organized a number of our own side events that we are very proud of. We had the opportunity to discuss the role of “Money in Politics”, present our “Handbook on the Follow-up of Electoral Recommendations”, debate about “Participation of Persons with Disabilities in political and public life”, present good practices in “Human Rights Compliant Assembly Policing”, debate on the “prevention of violent extremism and

radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT)” as well as “rule of law indicators”, “hate crimes” and “political participation of women”. Perhaps the most unusual side events we organized this year was the launch event of our “Turning Words Into Action to Address Anti-Semitism” project, which took place in the wonderful Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw. This not only allowed us to have an interesting panel debate in the museum’s auditorium and a reception in its beautiful premises, but also to showcase the good practices of our partner Polin in countering anti-Semitism through education. I encourage all convenors of side events, governmental or non-governmental, to use this as an example of how we can expand our debates beyond the usual conference venue and make use of the opportunities we have in our host city Warsaw, thereby making HDIM an even more interactive and modern event.

We also tried another innovation during this years’ opening session. First of all, we were very proud to have hosted a number of special guests for the session: Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the Minister of

Foreign Affairs of Germany and the OSCE's Chairperson-in-Office addressed us, as well as Witold Waszczykowski, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, and Parliamentary Assembly President Ms. Christine Muttonen. These presentations were followed by our first ever panel debate for the opening. Moderated by a prominent journalist, Dunja Mijatović, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Kenneth Roth, Executive Director of Human Rights Watch and Nils Muižnieks, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, debated about the state of "Democracy and Human Rights in the OSCE Area 25 Years after the Charter of Paris". I do hope that you found this debate as thought-provoking and interesting as I did.

But we not only tried to make HDIM more colourful by choosing new venues for side events and creating new formats for the opening, we also continued our efforts to bring its impact to a wider audience through the use of new technologies. A social media campaign was started on Facebook, Twitter and on the HDIM website to create

interest around the conference and let followers know that the meeting was approaching. As in previous years, the conference was furthermore livestreamed in English and Russian. Additionally, there was a “Twitter Wall” projected in the plenary hall, displaying tweets with the appropriate hashtag and thereby enriching our discussions with another layer of direct and interactive debate. During the course of the conference, over 11 000 tweets were sent, reaching 58.8 million Twitter users. Additionally, during the speakers’ presentations, relevant OSCE commitments were displayed in the hall, a reminder of what participating States have agreed to implement. Finally, the introduction of the HDIM app allowed us to provide you with regularly updated information on speakers, the agenda as well as all side events, making access to information more convenient and at the same time saving precious resources.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While I do believe that these innovations are important in order to maintain and even expand the reach of the issues debated at the

meeting, the most important aspect is of course what is being discussed and by whom. I am proud to say that the participation and content of the HDIM have in the last 20 years become broader and deeper every year, and it remains one of the largest and most important fora for discussing democratic institutions and human rights in Europe.

What makes it truly unique is not only the very breadth of discussions or the number of participants. It is the very formula envisaged by the participating States. This formula allows the participating States and OSCE Executive Structures to meet, take stock of developments and exchange ideas with both our countries' civil society organizations and other international organizations, and it does so in a way that everybody can participate on an equal footing.

Since 1993, HDIM has served as a platform for representatives of civil society and non-governmental organizations to raise human

dimension concerns with government representatives, with full access to and robust participation in the meeting.

In this context, it is alarming that we have received serious and credible allegations that multiple HDIM participants have been subject to intimidation, threats or reprisals against their families, in retaliation for their active participation in the HDIM. Those alleged reprisals go squarely against the letter and spirit of OSCE human dimension commitments, as well as the annual consensus-based decisions to hold the HDIM to review participating States' performance in this regard.

OSCE human dimension commitments in this context are clear: human rights are not only an internal affair, but also are of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States (Moscow 1991; Astana 2010). As early as the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, participating States confirmed “the right of the individual to know and act upon his [or

her human] rights”, including through co-operation between governmental and non-governmental representatives.

Openly discussing during HDIM is thus an essential feature of our meeting.

But we unfortunately also had to deal with acts of intimidation inside of the plenary. We cannot ignore the fact that we received complaints from participants and Delegations who felt threatened through the physical presence of certain participants, and that some participants were not comfortable with the fact that they were filmed by others during their statements and the footage of these statements was used politically outside of the meeting.

It should thus be clear: The open character of human dimension events needs and has to be maintained. It is an essential feature and only this makes them so valuable. But openness cannot mean anarchy,

and rules need to be maintained. Openness also does not mean that HDIM may be used and abused in order to disturb or intimidate participants and Delegations. I am therefore convinced that it is time to think about ways how we can preserve this character of open dialogue between participating States of the OSCE and civil society, while keeping fundamental rules of civility and order.

I therefore would like to suggest to you today that ODIHR enters into a discussion process with the Troika, in order to establish cornerstones of how we can proceed in the future. This process could, inter alia, touch on the following questions:

- How can we further encourage the participation of civil society actors who are able and willing to make meaningful contributions to our discussions?
- How can we ensure that participants and Delegations do not feel intimidated by others?

- What can we do against the widespread feeling that the extensive filming in the room does not contribute to discussions, but is to the contrary, intimidating? As you all know all debates are already livestreamed and available in the Internet.

- And finally: Do we need to limit the maximum number of participants from individual Civil Society Organisations, thereby making more space for others and thereby discouraging possible intimidation of other participants or delegation?

I am open to discuss these ideas with the Chairmanship and the incoming CiO and look forward to listening to your comments.

Thank you for your attention.