

Report to the Ministerial Council on the Modernization of Human Dimension Events

Background

In a statement following the adoption on 29 July 2011 by the Permanent Council of the decision on the agenda of the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in 2011, the Chairperson of the Permanent Council, taking “*note of the increased interest and will, as well as concrete proposals, of the participating States, as expressed in the course of preparations of the PC DEC on the HDIM 2011 agenda, to improve the organization and modalities of the Human Dimension meetings, so that these become more focused, more attractive and more effective*”, reconfirmed that the Lithuanian Chairmanship “*as follow up to the Astana Commemorative Declaration of 2010, which inter alia tasks the OSCE participating States to ‘further work towards strengthening the OSCE’s effectiveness and efficiency’*”, intended “*to start and facilitate a comprehensive and result-oriented discussion on the subject in appropriate OSCE formats, as stipulated in the PC.DEC/ 476 of 23 May 2002*”.¹

Proposals regarding reform ‘optimization’ ‘increasing effectiveness’ or ‘modernization’ of the OSCE human dimension events have been raised on many occasions over the years by various participating States. The modalities for the implementation by OSCE participating States of human dimension commitments were originally set out in Chapter VI of the Helsinki Document of 1992. These modalities provided, *inter alia*, for a three-week implementation meeting and additional seminars on specific topics.

In the light of the subsequent experience, the ministers decided at the Bucharest Ministerial Council meeting in December 2001 to task the Permanent Council with reviewing the modalities of human dimension meetings with a view to enhancing their effectiveness. The outcome of this review was Permanent Council decision No. 476 of 23 May 2002, which established the currently existing modalities for the human dimension meetings. The essential elements of this decision were the reduction of the length of the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) from three to two weeks and the holding each year of three informal Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings, each lasting one-and-a-half working days. This decision set out the arrangements for the participation by NGOs in human dimension meetings and the various procedural elements by means of which the dates, agenda and topics of the annual HDIM are agreed by the participating States in the Permanent Council. It also provided for the possibility for the Permanent Council, in the light of experience with the new arrangements, to make further adjustments with a view to strengthening the effectiveness and attraction of human dimension events.

¹ CIO.GAL/157/11

A further development took place in 2006, when a Human Dimension Committee was one of three committees established by the Brussels meeting of the Ministerial Council as informal subsidiary bodies of the Permanent Council. This was one of the recommendations included in the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons of 2005. That report also recommended that, in the event of a Human Dimension Committee being established, the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting “could be reduced to five days”. This recommendation did not, however, achieve consensus among the participating States. (It should be noted that the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons is not a consensus document).

In the course of the last three years, issues relating to the human dimension events were raised by various groups of participating States in the context of the Corfu Process, which preceded the Astana Summit meeting. These included many proposals for improving the effectiveness of the human dimension events which were often contradictory and indicated a considerable divergence in the views of the participating States on such issues as improving the monitoring of commitments, participation in the human dimension events of NGOs, duration of the HDIM, the level of participation by participating States in human dimension events, topics for inclusion on the agendas of human dimension events, and lack of follow-up to recommendations of the HDIM and other human dimension events. Despite frequent discussion of these topics prior to the Astana Summit meeting, no consensus was reached on changes.

Current situation

The Astana Summit meeting tasked the incoming OSCE Chairmanships with organizing a follow-up process within existing formats, taking into consideration ideas and proposals put forward by the participating States, including in the framework of the Corfu Process and in the preparation of the Astana Summit meeting. It was on the basis of this tasking that the Lithuanian Chairmanship decided, in consultation with the Chairperson of the Human Dimension Committee, to include the topic “reform of human dimension events” in the work programme of the Human Dimension Committee for 2011. In the light of the difficulties that arose over the adoption of the agenda for the 2011 HDIM, the Chairmanship reaffirmed that intention in its statement following adoption of the decision which is referred to at the beginning of this report. The first discussion of this topic was scheduled for the meeting of the Human Dimension Committee on 11 October 2011.

In preparation for the discussion on this topic in the Human Dimension Committee, the Chairperson of that Committee commissioned a report by an independent think tank with a view to contributing to a constructive debate on human dimension events. The report was to assess the current situation, its strengths and weaknesses, and collect the different views and positions, with a view to building common ground for a joint reflection within the Human Dimension Committee and beyond. It was also envisaged that the outcome of the study would identify and recommend options for making the human dimension events more attractive, effective, and focused. A Swiss think tank – Ximpulse – was selected to prepare the report, which was to be submitted in two phases. The first-phase paper, entitled “The OSCE Human Dimension Events: The Way Forward” provided a mapping of the status quo, a collection of various ideas on the future of human dimension events and an outline for an in-depth second-phase study. It was introduced by its authors at the meeting of the Human Dimension Committee on 11 October.

Even if the focus of the study was on the human dimension events (particularly Human Dimension Implementation Meetings, Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings and Human Dimension Seminars), Ximpulse stressed that the overall OSCE context could not be ignored because it influenced perception of the human dimension and of human dimension events. In order to provide a framework for the discussion on the reform of human dimension events, Ximpulse recommended looking at their overall goals and objectives in order to decide what to preserve and build on and what to adapt. It suggested that the reflections should be conducted at three levels, looking at: 1) the goals and objectives of human dimension events in general; 2) the role and sequencing of the various types of human dimension events; and 3) the design of individual events.

The subsequent discussion in the Human Dimension Committee once again confirmed the wide variety of views of participating States on modernization of the human dimension events. In his concluding remarks, the Chairperson of the Committee took note of this divergence and said that, for progress to be made, positions would need to come closer.

The second phase of the study will further explore the issues with respect to the proposed levels of discussion and collect proposals and assess them in the light of commitments and objectives and their potential impact on the overall system of human dimension events. It will also develop options in consultation with various stakeholders and in line with the objectives, distinguishing between options requiring a revision of the existing modalities for their realization and those that can be realized within the existing framework. This second-phase paper will be available at the end of the first quarter of 2012. This study conducted by Ximpulse aims at supporting the discussions in a structured way and at allowing for an enlightening debate, but it will be up to the participating States to assess the different options and to agree on a set of reform measures that can satisfy the different expectations of different stakeholders.

The initial discussion in the Committee was followed up by a brainstorming session on the way forward to increase the effectiveness of the human dimension events at the informal “human dimension away day” on 24 October. Once again, a great number of suggestions were made which emphasized the different approaches to the topic adopted by participating States and groups of participating States. Nevertheless, the Chairperson concluded that, even though some of the aspects surrounding the human dimension events still remained rather contested, such as the issue of NGO participation, at the same time, there were goals and objectives of human dimension events, that were more consensual – for example, identification of gaps in implementation. He noted that many spoke about such indicators of success as visibility of human dimension events, level of attendance by participating States (and NGOs), and finding of concrete remedies to address implementation gaps.

Conclusion and recommendations

In the light of the significant divergences of opinion among the participating regarding changes to the current arrangements for the human dimension events and what those changes, if any, might be, it is the view of the Chairmanship that it would be unrealistic to expect the emergence of consensus on any modifications to the current arrangements without an extensive and comprehensive discussion among the participating States. Such a discussion could commence with the presentation of the second-phase report by Ximpulse, which is

expected to provide food for thought, analysis and tools which would support such a discussion. It is understood that the second-phase report will be available at the end of the first quarter of 2012. It is recommended that the Irish Chairmanship convene an informal exchange of views at the level of Permanent Representative to discuss ways to progress the review of human dimension events.

Pending the outcome of this discussion, the Chairmanship strongly recommends that arrangements for the human dimension events in 2012 should be made in accordance with the provisions of Permanent Council Decision No. 476, and urges all the participating States to work co-operatively towards this goal.