

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2019
Closing Session – Statement by the Delegation of Canada, delivered by Counsellor Daniel
Barbarie, Friday, September 27, 2019

Madam Director,

We would to make a number of comments at this closing session, on the importance of this meeting and its value as a forum. Most important to Canada is its value to civil society, and we believe this was reaffirmed during the meeting by our discussions with civil society organizations, both large and small. They spoke of their ability to speak at the plenary on an equal footing with participating states; the ability to meet in the corridors with each other, as well as with civil society counterparts from different geographic regions, and highlighted their meetings with participating states. Our delegation had a number of beneficial and constructive meetings with civil society groups and individuals. We also found that the side events provided for more in-depth discussions on timely issues and were a valuable addition to the working sessions.

We regret that Turkey did not participate in the meeting this year, we believe that this was a missed opportunity to engage and respond to legitimate criticism and we hope that they will participate next year. As has been mentioned by a number of other delegations, there was an increased use of government-organized NGOs (GONGOs) this year, unfortunately by more participating states than in previous years. The use of “Gongos” undermines the purpose of this meeting and it represents a weakness on the part of the participating states that make use of them. In our view it is counterproductive, as it muddies legitimate criticism, making it difficult to differentiate between this and criticism supported by the state-sponsored proxies. We believe that

the states that make use of such proxies would be better served by allowing real civil society to raise real criticism.

We were concerned about the misuse of points of order throughout the meeting. The situation did improve and we thank ODIHR for responding to this matter. We would like to reiterate that Canada's objections on this matter were not directed towards any particular participating State, but was about the procedural matter at hand. In our view, it is important to allow civil society to speak, given that their time is limited and it should not be disrupted.

Madam Director,

We are concerned about the potential for reprisals and repercussions for civil society participants at HDIM, or for their families, and we reiterate our steadfast view that civil society participants must not, and cannot, be punished for their participation at HDIM.

Finally, we did see a well organized effort to mislead participating States and civil society regarding the situation in Crimea. We will not, and do not, recognize the illegal annexation and attempted occupation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. We can also state that this attempt to mislead did not work, and we are confident that vast majority of participants at this meeting share that assessment. In this regard, our delegation participated in a side event on the need for international human rights monitoring in Crimea, and given that many invitations have been proffered to visit Crimea we hope that the Special Monitoring Mission and the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights will be able to visit soon.

We would also like to welcome the incoming Albanian Chairmanship's stated human dimension priorities, and would repeat our call for early engagement and decisions on the 2020 HDIM agenda and specifically selected topics.

In conclusion, we would like to thank ODIHR, the Slovak Chairmanship, and Poland for their efforts in holding and hosting HDIM, ensuring that we have respected our commitments.

Thank you.