

**Address by**  
**Mr Paweł Wierdak**  
**Deputy Director of the Department of UN and Human Rights,**  
**In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland**  
**At the Opening Session**  
**Of the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**(Warsaw, September 22, 2014)**

**Mister Chairman,**  
**Excellencies,**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It gives me a great pleasure to welcome you, on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to this year's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw. Allow me to extend a special welcome to the distinguished heads of the OSCE institution and the Parliamentary Assembly, representative of the Swiss chairmanship and our key-note speaker today.

For some years now, the worsening human rights situation in the OSCE area has become a predominant theme raised by a number of delegations as well as institutions and invited guests. What concerns us is also the lack of constructive approach during discussions on the Implementation Meeting agenda and the inability to reach a consensus on new important issues like the freedom of speech in cyberspace. Unfortunately, these are not the only issues that will be absorbing us and overshadowing our discussions during this year's session. We are confronted with the most serious crisis that the OSCE has experienced in several years. Since the beginning of the crisis in Ukraine, we have seen serious violations of the rules of international law leading to a radical deterioration of security conditions and mutual trust in the Euro-Atlantic area, while also undermining Europe's security architecture. In order to rebuild them we need to find a peaceful and lasting solution to the crisis, in line with the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The OSCE occupies a significant place in this regard. The organisation has reaffirmed its important role in the face of the crisis. Moreover it has demonstrated that it possesses useful mechanisms in order to play this role. In this regard, the efforts undertaken by the Swiss Chair of the Organisation were no doubt of key importance. I also wish to emphasize the role played by the Special Monitoring Mission, which has enabled us to observe the situation in the region of the conflict, thus helping the international community to react to the changing circumstances. The contribution made by the Human Rights Assessment Mission to enable an assessment of the situation and the ODIHR activities in monitoring presidential elections cannot be overestimated. We also wish to express our appreciation to

the Representative on Freedom of the Media for her work in monitoring freedom of speech in Ukraine and for her principled condemnation of instances of its restriction.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The OSCE's overall security concept assumes that the observance of human rights and democratic rules is a key condition of friendly relations between states. The events of the last few months in Ukraine have proven how very true this concept is. They demonstrate that whenever attempts are made to restrict freedom of speech and the activities of civil society, media pluralism gives way to government propaganda. This also leads to lesser government accountability and to the government not keeping its end of the social contract. Very often disrespect to own society, rule of law and democracy, consequently translates into actions undertaken at the international level.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Irrespective of the external circumstances, the Implementation Meeting remains the fundamental mechanism used to verify the execution of commitments undertaken in the human dimension and an important instrument of promoting democracy and human rights in the Euro-Atlantic area. Its importance is due mainly to the large participation and full commitment of non-governmental organisations. I would like to express my appreciation to the OSCE Swiss Chair for its relentless efforts that have ultimately led to the adoption of the meeting agenda and made the meeting possible.

Our approval for the activities of the Chair is obviously based on much wider grounds. We fully share its conviction that commitments in the third dimension have to be better implemented. We also support giving the priority this year to counteracting torture and to the situation of human rights defenders. We greatly value the Berne Conference devoted to this subject matter, as well as its help in preparing and publishing the Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me now direct a few words to the organiser of our conference – the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. It should be given credit for effectively preparing the conference in difficult circumstances because of the late adoption of the agenda. In turn, the above mentioned Guidelines are an excellent example of the Office's right-on-target reaction to the current human rights situation. The same can be said about its reaction to the developments in Ukraine and the dynamically changing international situation.

In this context, I would like to wish Mr. Michael Link, the new ODIHR director who has been in office for less than three months, perseverance and many successes while fulfilling the tasks facing the ODIHR.

In closing, I would like to draw your attention to a side event, organised by the Polish MFA, devoted to the Warsaw Dialogue for Democracy. The Warsaw Dialogue initiative, whose next edition will be held in less than a month, was born out of a conviction that in order to promote democracy and human rights, a wide spectrum of instruments must be used, experiences exchanged and civil society should receive constant support.

I cordially invite you to take part in this side event on 1 October as well as to our reception today, traditionally organised by the MFA.

I wish you interesting and fruitful proceedings.

Thank you for your attention.