

# 18<sup>th</sup> HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

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Closing remarks by

**Michael Georg Link**

Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Check against delivery!

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very happy to speak to you for a final time at the closing session of this year's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting.

As in the years before, we were gathered here to discuss the implementation of the Human Dimension commitments of the OSCE participating States. These discussions were sometimes very intense and sometimes very controversial. But, from what I have seen and heard, they have always been vibrant, engaging, and presenting a plurality of views.

And this is exactly what makes HDIM so valuable: It is not only Europe's largest human rights conference, gathering hundreds of people from states, international organizations, media and NGOs to discuss about all aspects of the human dimension. It is also one of the very few fora where these actors, who

obviously have very different agendas and policy ideas, can sit at the same table and discuss on an equal footing.

The OSCE has, from its very beginnings in Helsinki, been a place where things could be openly discussed where there was otherwise nothing but silence and confrontation.

And, indeed, it is until today a place of open dialogue across the entire OSCE region. An institution other regions envy us for. It is my personal goal and commitment to preserve HDIM as a place of open debate, where discussions are always substantial, and always to the point. I am furthermore dedicated to keep HDIM as open and as accessible as possible, so that every voice can be heard.

And finally, I am very grateful to Ambassador Thomas Greminger for having proposed to move HDIM to another date. While this would indeed make the organization of HDIM easier, it is not a reform per se, because there is a Permanent Council

decision that HDIM should not collide with other major international events. And for many years the collision of the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting with the UN General Assembly has made the organization of our meeting very difficult.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

After two very intense and highly interesting weeks, I will refrain from reporting on individual working sessions. We will, as always, provide the delegations with written reports in hard copy and, for everyone interested to see, present them on our website.

Furthermore, as per established practice, I am soon going to present the full report about this year's HDIM to the participating States in front of the Permanent Council in Vienna.

However, it is a good tradition to present some statistics with regards to the participation in this 18<sup>th</sup> Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. This meeting gathered an impressive record number of 1225 representatives from governments, NGOs and civil society activists, coming from 53 of our participating States. It is well worth noting that almost 700 of these were representatives from NGOs.

The most popular session was, as in many years before, Working session 13, on Tolerance and non-discrimination, including racism, xenophobia and intolerance on religious grounds. Here, we had an intense discussion with an impressive 85 statements.

An unprecedented number of 82 side events were organized on the margins of this HDIM to highlight and address a wide range of human dimension topics. In comparison, last year we had 66 side events, which was at the time already a record number. These provided opportunities for governments to present best practices, for NGOs to inform about their activities and for more detailed on various issues related to democracy and human rights in the OSCE area.

As every year, the participating States as well as NGOs provided a wide range of recommendations on human dimension issues that addressed the implementation of OSCE commitments in participating States. These recommendations will be compiled thematically by ODIHR for each working session and distributed to all participants in the consolidated report. Furthermore, the meetings in the Plenary have been live streamed on the web and are still accessible online.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

If there is anything these numbers prove, it is the ongoing relevance and importance of this meeting.

This confirms the great interest in the human dimension and the review of the implementation of OSCE commitments. I believe that this should be kept in mind when participating States discuss ways and means to make this meeting more effective, and more attractive.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me conclude by thanking our host country Poland, the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship, all Delegations of our participating States and Partners for Co-operation, NGO representatives,

colleagues from the OSCE institutions and field operations as well as other international organizations for taking an active role in this year's Human Dimension Implementation meeting.

I would also like to thank the OSCE Secretary General, Mr. Lamberto Zannier, for speaking to us today, as well as all introducers, moderators and rapporteurs who participated in the sessions of the past weeks. Finally, I would like to thank the interpreters and my excellent and dedicated ODIHR-Team for the very hard work they have invested to make this meeting a great success.

I look forward to welcoming all of you to Warsaw next year, in whatever month this will be!