

Working Session 18: Discussion of human dimension activities (with special emphasis on project work)

Rapporteur: Ms. Anna Pogwizd, Second Secretary, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland to the OSCE

No of statements: 3

Delegations: 3

Civil Society: 0

OSCE Institutions: 0

International Organizations: 0

Media: 0

Rights of reply: 5

The session was opened by Mr. Luc Lietaer, Project Co-ordinator at ODIHR, who introduced the speakers representing five OSCE field missions, including OSCE Mission to Skopje, OSCE Mission to Serbia, OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek, and OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine. The OSCE Programme Office in Astana planned to make a presentation via Internet connection focusing on the Office's torture prevention work. Due to technical issues, the presentation could not be displayed, but it will be shared with participants through the distribution system.

The five speakers focused on practical aspects of their daily work with the respective host countries and identified examples of tangible outcomes, good practices as well as remaining challenges and lessons learned.

The OSCE Office in Bishkek representative's presentation focused on the Office's work in the field of strengthening local institutions' capacities and its co-operation with the civil society, promoting inclusiveness and transparency embedded in civilian oversight. Examples include contribution to enactment of laws on tackling early marriages and domestic violence, which strengthened the mechanism for prevention and protection of victims. The presenter also played a video *My Plea to You* created by teenage girl beneficiaries of the Office's *Activism against gender-based violence* campaign.

The OSCE Project Co-Coordinator in Ukraine (PCU) representative referred to PCU's work in improving adherence to the rule of law commitments, ranging from supporting dialogue on reshaping the Supreme Court to police training, with an overarching goal of promoting a culture of rule of law. The PCU has also been helping the Ministries of Education and Justice introduce standards-based legal education, as well as supporting the development of a range of textbooks for law students.

The work of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Hercegovina is based on regular contacts with the authorities, law enforcement and returnees when it comes to tackling prejudices and bias-motivated crimes, threatening stability and cohesion of communities. Good practices include building local "coalitions against hate", working on prevention and information sharing on hate and bias related incidents. Through the Mission's advocacy, amendments to criminal procedure codes have been introduced.

The OSCE Mission to Skopje representative described Mission's work towards increasing stability, social cohesion and implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement by

promoting constructive inter-ethnic relations, democratic principles and the rule of law. The Mission engages with the host country's central and local government institutions developing legislation and policies, while also advancing the independence and impartiality of the judiciary. The Mission is also building capacity of the civil society, i.e. in the area of trial monitoring, in following up on hate motivated incidents or through its youth work. Examples include working with the Ministry of Education to facilitate dialogue on integrated education or supporting the South Eastern European University project, initiated by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, to improve opportunities for higher education in minority languages.

The OSCE Mission to Serbia representative pointed out that missions operate in complex environments, where their goals might be clearly defined, but the political consensus - not only on the ground, but also within the Permanent Council - needed to achieve them often needs time to be formed. It takes vision and determination to plan projects which only begin to show results after several OSCE budget cycles. Therefore solid, reliable funding, political support, time and trust, as well as skilled and motivated staff are key.

The delegations which took the floor expressed their strong support to the work of ODIHR, RFoM, HCNM and to the field missions, stressing that project work remains an important way for the Executive Structures to engage with participating States and to assist them in the implementation of OSCE commitments. Some delegations mentioned the crucial work of those structures in response to the crisis in and around Ukraine that include confidence building measures and strengthening of dialogue among civil society and government stakeholders on human dimension issues. One delegation stressed the need for the OSCE structures to be able to fully monitor the human rights situation in the occupied territory of Crimea.

Some delegations also underlined the role of the Human Dimension Committee (HDC) in amplifying the OSCE dialogue in areas such as freedom of religion or belief, freedom of expression, the upholding of commitments on torture, women's participation in public and political life, freedom of assembly and association and, the role of society in combating hate crime. They referred to the HDC as a platform for participating States to share examples of how they have turned OSCE recommendations into concrete action, i.e. through voluntary reports.

In view of one delegation, the Executive Structures are to adapt a more demand driven approach, respecting the specific requirements of participating States, while also increasing the transparency and accountability of their work.

Recommendations made by participants during this session include (non-exhaustive list):

Recommendations to the OSCE participating States:

- Participating States should take advantage of the services offered by OSCE Executive Structures in enhancing the implementation of commitments, including by facilitating visits and monitoring missions by the institutions;
- Participating States should ensure the timely adoption of the OSCE Unified Budget in order to ensure the Executive Structures can efficiently plan their activities;
- Participating States shall continue seconding high quality, motivated staff to the OSCE Executive Structures.

Recommendations to the OSCE Executive Structures:

- The Executive Structures should continue to co-ordinate closely with each other and with other relevant international actors, such as the Council of Europe and the UN, to learn from each other's experiences, avoid duplication and bolster the impact of activities;
- When designing projects and activities, the Executive Structures should foster close collaboration with civil society and increase their participation in the implementation phase;
- The Executive Structures should continue to improve the monitoring and evaluation of their projects, from conception through to completion, including by prioritizing the use of key performance indicators and implementing results-based management practice;
- The Executive Structures should be accountable and transparent and should improve the geographical and thematic balance of their work;
- The implemented projects should be consistent with the existing executive structure and follow clearly set objectives.