



Right of Reply Delegation of Hungary

Opening Plenary HDIM, 19. September 2016. Warsaw

I was happy to hear a reference to 1956 Hungarian refugees, many of whom I am honored to know, and their enormous contribution to societies that were generous to receive them. Their behavior, solemn resolution of their situation, compliance with rules and patience while waiting for their fate to turn for the better is still, after 60 years, an outstanding example.

I would like to take this opportunity and address a few remarks that were made during the opening roundtable.

If we dilute the difference by insensitive statements between, on one hand, countries that are serious violators of fundamental human rights and, on the other hand, democracies that took the arduous work to screen, explain and harmonize their respective policies with their European partners, we not only establish double standards, but we also disrespect the importance of European institutions whose mandate is to evaluate such policies.

We put these debates behind us by standing up for our decisions and policies, and making adjustments as a result of the process. Hungary has fulfilled its obligation as a European democracy, in concert with other European democracies and democratic institutions.

With respect to our work with the RFoM, as a part of our ongoing exchange, we had requested an inventory of outstanding issues at the Basel Ministerial. We have yet to receive them, and will be happy to address them accordingly, just like in the past.

Countries that may express a more conservative outlook on the world, yet fully comply with every democratic requirement there is, deserve the same uncompromised respect for their democratic policies. European citizens, just as countries, look at probably 90% of current issues in a similar way, finding common ground very easily. There are a number of issues, though, that are at the center of public interest currently, which represent a small but important minority of debates, and we run a serious risk of alienating the public from these debates if we do not handle them openly. Addressing these issues in an open and democratic manner is essential. Labelling and name-calling countries and politicians who champion these debates is counter-productive, and diverts our efforts from addressing them democratically in their entirety.

Our goal and obligation with these debates is double-fold: we stand up for the rights and responsibilities of individual countries to address them, yet, at the same time we are just as well committed that the widest possible breadth of the European public is aware, and has the right and opportunity to express their views in the process.