



Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw
Working Session on the Freedom of Assembly and Association, 21 September 2016
Martin Hasler, Second Secretary
Office for Foreign Affairs, Principality of Liechtenstein

Thank you, Madam Moderator.

In the last year, the situation of civil society actors has further deteriorated across the OSCE region. The HDIM continues to be a unique forum for open dialogue with civil society and non-governmental organisations in recognition of their essential role as pillars of democratic and free societies. Yet their space continues to shrink, often in direct violation of States' legal obligations to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of everyone, in particular the freedom of assembly. In exercising their right to free assembly, civil society actors and peaceful demonstrators often suffer reprisals, including harassment, imprisonment, sometimes even injury or death.

Liechtenstein would like to stress the important role that a free civil society has for democracy in increasing the quality of policies at all levels and in all aspects. It is in the best interest of the state to constructively engage in dialogue and cooperation with civil society. A key precondition for such a dialogue is the full respect for the right to assemble freely, which has to be honoured in particular against disproportional restrictions in light of security concerns. The OSCE's comprehensive concept of security is an important safeguard against such restrictions.

Thank you.