



Check against delivery!

Closing Plenary Session, 30 September 2005
Ambassador Christian Strohal
Director of the ODIHR

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear colleagues,

I will not even attempt to summarize the discussions of the last two weeks now in these last few minutes of the HDIM. We will soon be distributing a comprehensive written report containing all the recommendations made at this year's meeting. Moreover, I will have an opportunity to brief the Permanent Council in October on some of the highlights of this 10th HDIM. Let me however share with you some of the observations I have collected during the past two weeks.

First of all, after all we have heard on the state of fundamental freedoms, democracy, rule of law, respect and tolerance in the OSCE region, the argument that the Human Dimension is given too much attention rings rather hollow. I firmly believe that since the first discussions on these issues at the first HDIM more than a decade ago we can proudly point to a lot of progress and have accumulated a wealth of good practices to share. Let me state very clearly, however, that we are far from a situation where all commitments are fully respected. Human rights abuses, electoral fraud, unstable democratic institutions, torture, discrimination of minorities, anti-Semitism, racism and other phenomena throughout the OSCE region continue to pose a threat to the very fabric of our societies and therefore to security and stability in the whole region.

If anything, this meeting has strengthened my conviction that we should be doing *more* rather than less in the Human Dimension – all of us, participating States, OSCE Institutions and field presences, and civil society. The responsibility to protect, which I mentioned at the opening,

has been made very clear, I believe. So has been the fact that this is a shared responsibility.

This responsibility can only then be assumed effectively if we realize the need for genuine dialogue. At his opening speech last week, our host, Minister Switalski, underlined the necessity for frank and open discussions at this meeting. Having followed the debates here in this room, in particular those involving States and civil society, I believe the HDIM does stand up to scrutiny in this respect.

This responsibility necessitates also inclusiveness. In terms of openness, the HDIM is a unique asset of the OSCE. Whereas the decision making bodies of the Organization are closed to the public, it is the presence of civil society and their participation on an equal footing that makes the HDIM so special. To those who would want to consider cutting down or shortening the HDIM I can only say the following: that would curtail the voice of civil society in the OSCE at a time when it should be heard more loudly.

I am pleased that this year we were again able to register a record number of representatives, including of NGO representatives: you were close to 1000 registered, of which 433 were NGO representatives, that is an increase by more than 40%. That is almost 100 more than last year. This high level of interest by civil society is a reaffirmation of the Helsinki Principles and of the fundamental OSCE commitment to human security in all its aspects.

I am also glad that a number of participating States have made a particular effort to participate in the meeting, showing that states too see the great value in this dialogue. For the first time in several years, we are again able to welcome the representative of Turkmenistan at this meeting.

We will now work together with the Chairmanship and Delegations to take recommendations made at this Conference forward to the upcoming Ministerial Council meeting in Ljubljana in December and beyond. I am confident that a number of decisions will emanate from the discussions we have had here.

I also hope that the experience of the last two weeks will inspire Delegates from participating States in their ongoing debate on reforming

the OSCE and making it more effective. Not only the issues raised but also the spirit of open dialogue in which meetings are discussed and the courage and dedication of many civil society activists should be kept in mind.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I conclude, a few words about the housekeeping of this meeting. I mentioned the electronic Documents Distribution System, accessible through the bank of workstations in the corridor outside this hall. As of last night, participants had submitted a total of 513 documents to our Secretariat (more than 3000 pages).

This on-demand copying, along with the possibility to e-mail texts to your offices, means not only less baggage on your return flights but also a significant savings to the ODIHR, of a factor of 10, in fact. You have emailed some 10,000 documents, which is more than a year ago, which indicates to us that you are making use of the system and appreciate our innovative approach. We are now working with the Secretariat in Vienna to provide Delegations with a CD-ROM of all the documents and to establish a link through the OSCE/ODIHR website to enable access through Internet.

I stress that this system was designed and implemented in house by ODIHR personnel, using simple software and surplus hardware. Again, thanks to Zuzanna Lukaszczyk, Bartek Bielecki and Piotrek Stepień for their work on this.

We increase the effectiveness of the OSCE through very simple steps, and through listening to our staff.

Thanks also are due to Basia Matusiewicz-Protas, the guardian of the speakers' list, whom many of you have visited in the past two weeks. She has once again done an excellent job in helping the moderators bring order out of potential chaos.

Likewise to Irek Stepinski, our Senior Conference Services Assistant, who solves problems before they even appear. And to Ania Sierant, who

has again managed to produce a clear and comprehensive list of participants from your electronic registrations and a large number of barely legible faxes. To Jakhongir for looking again so well after a record number of NGOs, to Toralv Nordbo, for the overall coordination of preparations and the smooth conduct of the meeting, and to all our staff – all involved, all appreciating occasions for concrete interaction with delegations.

And finally, to the interpreters, who have sometimes struggled to make sure that your thoughts are clearly understood by those among us who do not understand your language and who have been willing to work an extra few minutes on occasion to ensure that speaking time is given to as many participants as possible.

Our special gratitude goes to our Polish hosts, for our welcome not only during these two weeks for the HDIM but for hosting the ODIHR here so hospitably, and last but certainly not least, to the Slovenian Chairmanship Team, in particular Simona Drenik and Urska Ajdisek.

In conclusion, I thank you all for your input before and during the meeting and for carrying messages forward.

On its tenth occurrence, the HDIM has again proven, maybe more strongly than ever, to have the capacity to serve not only as a forum but also as a crucial tool for the implementation of commitments.

The HDIM is the highpoint of human dimension activities in the OSCE year. No other OSCE meeting brings so many people together for discussion on so many topics. At the tenth HDIM we can proudly look back at the many achievements of the OSCE in the Human Dimension. Certainly, 30 years after the Helsinki Final Act, we face many new challenges and should strive to meet them most effectively. But implementation reviews such as this one show that the commitments undertaken in Helsinki, Copenhagen, Moscow, Paris, Budapest, Istanbul, Maastricht, Sofia and elsewhere remain valid. There cannot be, there must not be, any walking back or walking away from the progress we have achieved in the OSCE region.

But there is no doubt that we can all do better. None of us – governments, organizations, institutions, or civil society – can pretend to be perfect. We

should all be prepared to continue this dialogue, share successes, to admit some mistakes, to accept constructive criticism, and, most importantly, to work together for solutions.

Let me thank you for the trust placed in our institution and for the many kind words we have received. I take them as a call to continue our dialogue with you, and look forward to working with you all, as we continue to develop our programmes and implement them.

Farewell, safe journey and see you again in Warsaw next year.