

Check Against Delivery

STATEMENT BY THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF
SERBIA AMBASSADOR VUK ŽUGIĆ AT THE OPENING PLENARY SESSION OF THE
OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

19 September 2016, Warsaw

At the outset, we would like to express our appreciation to the German OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office for organizing this year's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. We would also like to thank the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights for all preparations of this meeting, which takes place in the year when we celebrate its 25th anniversary. From its first, small office in Warsaw the ODIHR has become essential provider of assistance to governments and civil society in OSCE participating States. We are as well grateful to our Polish hosts for their hospitality.

The work carried out by the OSCE institutions is one of the cornerstones of the OSCE's human dimension and we trust that their mandates and capacities should be fully utilized, thus contributing to foster peace and stability in the OSCE region. This is particularly important at the time when we witness worrying trends of intolerance, discrimination and hate crime targeting specific groups - migrants, refugees, national and other minorities. These negative developments continue to threaten security in the increasingly diverse societies across the OSCE region and we believe that the support of the OSCE institutions to the participating States in addressing these challenges is of particular importance. In this respect, we hope for a timely appointment of a new OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities.

As one of the largest annual human rights forums, OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting presents a valuable platform for discussion among participating States and with civil society on the implementation of the human dimension commitments including the discussions on persistent as well as new and emerging challenges. From today to past times we have witnessed that security cannot be achieved without full respect for human rights, the rule of law and functioning democratic institutions. OSCE's comprehensive and cross-dimensional approach proves its relevance with every day and with many challenges we face.

The crises and protracted conflicts are becoming more frequent and increasingly complexed. For the last two years, we have been facing crisis in and around Ukraine, one of the biggest in the history of our Organization. Let me once more reiterate our strong belief that we must do our utmost and invest all possible efforts to find the peaceful solutions and to rebuild trust and

confidence within the OSCE region. Particularly we should not lose sight of the fact that in the times of conflicts and crisis, the fundamental human rights are the ones the most affected. Therefore, we need to reconfirm our dedication to promote and respect human dimension commitments regardless of the challenge we face.

For quite some time now we are experiencing the increased influx of refugees and migrants, which raised many human rights issues. It is evident that we need a comprehensive, long-term, coordinated and joint response to address the ongoing crisis. It requires equal commitment of all us to ensure that responses to the ongoing migration and refugee issues are grounded in respect for human rights obligations and human dignity. They should be as well in compliance with our respective international obligations, and consistent with relevant OSCE commitments. With its comprehensive concept of security and cross-dimensional approach the OSCE is an indispensable forum for discussions on all of these challenges and we believe that the OSCE and its Executive Structures complement the activities carried out by the other International Organizations.

It is clear that we need to devote particular attention to the human rights situation in the OSCE area and every year the OSCE Chairmanships have been trying to reconcile many diverging views of the participating States and set the agenda that would embrace all concerns and issues we need to address during a year.

Last year, Serbia has paid a special attention to the rule of law, national human rights institutions, freedom of expression and freedom of the media, including safety of journalist, freedom of religion or belief, freedom of assembly and association, protection of rights of persons belonging to national minorities and promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination, as well as gender and youth as cross-cutting topics.

We also supported to the role of the civil society which remained high on the agenda during our two Swiss and Serbian consecutive Chairmanships. For example, both countries carried out self-evaluation of the implementation of their OSCE commitments in cooperation with civil society and we welcome that this practice is continued also by the current German OSCE Chairmanship.

Some of these topics continued to be in the focus of our work also this year in the framework of the German OSCE Chairmanship`s priorities. We hope that lack of trust and divisions that undermined our efforts at the last year`s Ministerial Council in Belgrade and prevented us from adopting almost agreed deliverables will be overcome and that we will be able to have a positive outcome in the human dimension later this year. We look ahead to a more constructive spirit and the productive debates during these two weeks. Let me assure you that Serbia, as the OSCE Troika member will actively engage and support work towards achieving the concrete results in the human dimension.

Thank for your attention.