

## OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING 2006

### EU statement for the opening plenary session:

#### Opening statement by Ambassador Markus Lyra, Undersecretary of State, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

2 October, Warsaw

Mr Chairman,

It gives me great pleasure to address the opening session of the 12th OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting on behalf of the European Union.

Let me first thank Deputy Minister Doctor Stanczyk and the Government of Poland hosting this meeting in the dynamic city of Warsaw, where the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) also has its headquarters.

Let me also extend cordial greetings to the Chairman in Office, Foreign Minister of Belgium, Karel de Gucht whose dedication for presiding over the OSCE this year has been admirable. We will support Belgian chairmanship in their challenging tasks and we thank State Secretary for European Affairs, Didier Donfut, for opening the HDIM on behalf of the Chairman in Office, who is currently in Georgia on other OSCE business.

Since 1975 the organisation and its comprehensive approach to security has made an important contribution to the security of Europe. The human dimension has played a pivotal role in this work. To maintain stability and security, it is essential to strengthen human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Much has been done, but the work is by no means completed. We must keep vigilance to react to deficiencies in the implementation of the human dimension commitments and strive to improve the commitments, and when necessary, be ready to develop new ones. In this work the OSCE, its institutions and the field presences play a crucial role. Naturally their work must be coordinated with other international actors in the field, notably with the UN and the Council of Europe so that the comparative strengths of each organisation can be fully utilized.

The participating States have categorically and irrevocably declared that the commitments undertaken in the field of human dimension are matters of direct and legitimate concern and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned. And it is in this spirit of our common commitments that we prepare to discuss the implementation of commitments here in Warsaw for the next two weeks.

OSCE participating States have not only the right, but also the duty to hold each other accountable for the commitments they have made in protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. The European Union will not shy away from highlighting situations where it believes participating States have failed to live up to their commitments. The EU is of course prepared to assist participating States

in institution and capacity building to help them ensure respect for human rights, democratic government and rule of law.

No country is perfect in terms of human rights. The EU is making efforts to improve its own performance to meet new challenges. We expect the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia to be transformed soon into the EU Fundamental Rights Agency and further develop its activities. The EU is also engaged in an open and frank dialogue on human rights with several countries.

Mr Chairman,

The Human Dimension Implementation Meeting of the OSCE is a unique event that gathers representatives of the Governments, international organisations and civil society to view the implementation of the OSCE commitments made by the participating States.

At this meeting the civil society and NGOs play a fundamental role and the meeting should constitute a fruitful forum in which important issues, sometimes also difficult and contradictory ones, can be discussed between the Governments and civil society. Respectively this should also be the case in the Participating States. At the national level human rights defenders help to document violations of fundamental freedoms, provide support to victims of such violations, and fight against the culture of impunity. At international level, they monitor the human rights situation, pass information to regional and international fora such as the OSCE. The EU is very pleased to note that the civil society is so numerous present at this meeting.

The role of the HDIM would ideally be to look at trees but also see the forest. Where are participating States heading in terms of the respect of human rights and other human dimension commitments? If there is the danger that a number of states not only fail to comply with commitments but more and more condone each others' noncompliance, this would be the forum to blow the whistle. Mr Chairman, Let me finally thank ODIHR for organising this meeting, and I can assure you, ambassador Strohal, that you and your highly professional staff has the full confidence and support of the European Union for the valuable work it performs.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia <sup>1</sup> and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Montenegro, and Serbia, EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

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<sup>1</sup> Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process