



## **OSCE High Level Meeting on Victims of Terrorism**

**Vienna 13-14 September 2007**

**Closing Statement by  
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First Deputy Director  
of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and  
Human Rights**

**Check against delivery!**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The last two days have been interesting and useful and clearly constitute a good first step for the OSCE as it engages with and involves participating States together with civil society in the issue of solidarity with victims of terrorism.

As I stressed at the outset of this High-Level Meeting, the notion of solidarity is not synonymous with “mere mercy”, a munificence showered upon victims. On the contrary, solidarity is tightly tied to the OSCE’s concept of collective security, and in particular to the prevention of terrorism. The recently adopted UN Counter-Terrorism Strategy clearly addresses this point. Among the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, it says, are “prolonged unresolved conflicts, *dehumanization of victims of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations*, lack of the rule of law and violations of human rights, ethnic, national and religious discrimination, political exclusion, socio-economic marginalization and lack of good governance.”

Indeed, one main objective of this High-Level Meeting was to clarify the meaning of *solidarity with victims of terrorism*. We explored practical ideas for demonstrating, *concretely*, such solidarity. We did so by trying to provide broad answers to the following four questions:

1. *How can solidarity with victims of terrorism be best expressed at an international level?*
2. *What models of assistance and cooperation for victims of terrorism may States consider?*
3. *What considerations need to be made in regard of access to justice? And,*
4. *What are the different roles for civil society in solidarity with victims of terrorism?*

I found that the discussion during the past two days fruitfully addressed these interlinked issue-areas and hope they will provide useful and practical guidance in shaping consistent and sustainable initiatives in support of victims of terrorism. Let me, in this regard,

again thank the Spanish Chairmanship for their strong support, and also the dedicated team from ODIHR for their hard work.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of civil society to this meeting. I found that the presence of a large number of NGOs and representatives of associations of victims of terrorism from across the OSCE region constituted a clear added value. Constructive and often substantive suggestions and recommendations to both participating States and to OSCE institutions were received and duly taken note of and will be included in the meetings' final report.

Indeed, one of the main insights for me at this meeting was that meaningful solidarity with victims of terrorism can only be achieved through genuine cooperation and partnership between governments and civil society.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this context, I would like to underline that the ODIHR continues to hold up the tenets of the Helsinki document of 1992, according

to which all plenary meetings of review conferences, and implementation meetings, as well as other expert meetings are open to NGOs, in order to “promote contacts and exchanges of views between NGOs and relevant national authorities”. Exceptions to this rule have only been foreseen, in paragraph 16 of Chapter IV of the Document, in case that an NGO or its representatives have resorted to the use of violence or have publicly condoned terrorism, or the use of violence.

The *Russian-Chechen Friendship Society* is one of numerous NGOs with which the ODIHR has been regularly in touch over the past years, and the *Friendship Society* has actively participated in previous human dimension meetings. On none of these occasions was the ODIHR able to ascertain that any of the allegations brought against Ms Chelysheva were true. As such, we are not aware of any ground that would substantiate a reason to exclude this organization from participating in an OSCE meeting. On the contrary, we remember the participation of this NGO as having previously been active and constructive.

Participation in human dimension events will continue to be guided by the decision taken by participating States in Helsinki in

1992. I hope to see many of you in Warsaw for the Human Dimension Implementation Meetings, which opens Monday in a week.

Thank you and have a safe travel home.