



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2013 Warsaw, 4 October 2013

EU statement – Closing session

Mr Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am privileged to speak on behalf of the European Union at this closing session of the 2013 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting.

As the European Union Special Representative on Human Rights Mr Stavros Lambrinidis stressed in his keynote speech human rights cannot be dealt with in a vacuum and are an integral part of comprehensive security.

We would like to see all of the OSCE's human dimension commitments fully implemented by all participating States. After almost two decades of annual gatherings, HDIM remains a unique peer review mechanism during which participating States hold each other to account and are held to account by civil society for the fulfilment of their commitments. This year's HDIM has again highlighted a number of good practices and recommendations to the challenges all of us are facing. But still, much remains to be done to address existing and emerging shortcomings.

For us, some of the more prominent themes and lessons have been the following:

- Freedom of expression and free, independent and pluralistic media are cornerstones of any democratic society and represent an essential part of our OSCE commitments;
- Independent journalism plays an indispensable role in the promotion and protection of human rights, and therefore the safety of journalists and media workers must be enhanced;
- Human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, apply online as they do offline;
- Adopting a comprehensive approach in combating all forms of intolerance and discrimination, including on the ground of sexual orientation and gender identity is imperative;
- Participating States need to promote and protect freedom of religion or belief for every person, irrespective of religious denomination or non-belief;
- Freedoms of assembly and association are intrinsic to any democratic society and facilitate the fulfilment of many other rights including the freedom of expression; Participating States should avoid imposing restrictions on organisations' and individuals' right to associate and seek to facilitate the holding of assemblies rather than resorting to banning demonstrations;
- Human rights defenders play an important role and their work needs to be protected and facilitated;
- Participating States need to implement fully our election-related commitments and support the work of ODIHR in this field;
- More efforts are needed to promote gender equality;
- The abolition of the death penalty is essential to protect human dignity and to the progressive development of human rights;
- Rule of law and in particular an independent judicial system are an essential tool to guarantee human rights;
- More efforts are needed to improve social inclusion of Roma and

Sinti.

Mr Chairperson,

as we have said before restrictions to and violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms should be addressed as a matter of priority, also because they have the ability to adversely affect human security.

The EU would like to emphasize the key role that OSCE executive structures and autonomous Institutions – Representative on Freedom of the Media, High Commissioner for National Minorities and ODIHR - as well as OSCE field missions play in assisting us, the participating States of the OSCE, in implementing our commitments in the human dimension.

We reiterate the importance of civil society's role in monitoring of the implementation of our OSCE commitments. A vibrant and free civil society is essential for ensuring respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. We call on all participating States to implement relevant commitments by enhancing rather than limiting the ability of NGOs to make their full contribution to the respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and democracy, including free and fair elections.

The number of side-events organized this year shows a real interest of the NGOs in contributing to the OSCE Human Dimension. We encourage greater and more systematic involvement of free and vibrant civil society organisations in OSCE events, as well as in the work of the Human Dimension Committee.

In this context, we express our regret that the delegation of Turkmenistan decided not to participate in the meeting, thus missing a valuable

opportunity for an open and frank dialogue with other participating States and civil society.

Mr Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The completion of this year's HDIM is an ideal opportunity for us to reflect upon the ongoing discussions in Vienna on the possible review of Human Dimension events. We encourage all participating States to take stock of this year's HDIM and consider whether there are any ways in which we can further strengthen the meeting's effectiveness and attractiveness.

We reiterate our view that any changes should have the effect of enhancing the importance of the human dimension in the concept of comprehensive security.

The EU would like to stress that the proper follow up to the HDIM is essential to its success. The discussion of the ODIHR Director's report by the government representatives of all 57 OSCE participating States, and consideration of the insightful recommendations, as provided by members of civil society during this meeting, should serve for planning future OSCE human dimension activities including the work of the Human Dimension Committee.

We commend the incoming Swiss Chairmanship for presenting its human dimension priorities in the margins of HDIM. We stand ready to actively contribute to the implementation of these plans, with the aim of improving implementation of the OSCE commitments and strengthening dialogue with civil society.

In conclusion, the EU wishes to thank the Government of Poland for its

hospitality, the Ukrainian Chairmanship, and specially Ambassador Janez Lenarčič and his dedicated team for the excellent preparation of HDIM, and all those who contributed to the effective conduct of the meeting, including the moderators, keynote speakers, rapporteurs and interpreters. We express our gratitude to the representatives of civil society including human rights defenders for their active participation in the meeting and their invaluable contribution to our discussions.

Thank you for your kind attention.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro* and Serbia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

** the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*