



Statement by Ms Päivi Laivola de Rosière
Ambassador
Finland

OSCE 2017 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, Working Session 2:
Fundamental freedoms I, including: Freedom of peaceful assembly and
association, national human rights institutions and the role of civil society in the
protection of human rights, 12th September 2017

Finland aligns itself with the EU statement and recommendations presented by
the United Kingdom.

The promotion and protection of human rights is a high priority for Finland.
Freedom of association and assembly are key to a democratic society and
functioning of active and free civil society.

In Finland free and active participation of civil society in all spheres of life,
including political decision-making, has been - and continues to be - an important
contributor to building our society. It is fair to say that a vibrant and pluralistic
civil society has benefited Finland tremendously by increasing stability, equality
and prosperity.

Thanks to the internet and social media, human rights are better known
worldwide than ever before. However, in many countries around the world the
space of civil society has shrunk. There are new threats to freedom of
association and expression – for example growing attempts to use technical
means to censor information and ideas online.

Promotion of the work of human rights defenders is a traditional priority for
Finland. We are fully committed to the implementation of the EU guidelines on
the Human Rights Defenders. Additionally, we have our own national guidelines
- based on the EU guidelines - for the promotion and protection of human rights
defenders.

We are very concerned about increasing attempts to limit and prevent the work
of human rights defenders in many countries. NGOs, journalists, bloggers and
others promote human rights or reveal human rights violations and corruption.

Human rights defenders should be able to work safely without fear and harassment. Governments should ensure an enabling environment for their work. Special attention should be paid to women human rights defenders.

Our government is a strong supporter of the work of the OSCE in the field of human rights, the rule of law and democracy. We support the OSCE independent institutions and their strong and independent mandates and highly appreciate their vital work, including the promotion of the issues we are discussing today – freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.

We would like to present the following recommendations. All of us, we, the participating States should:

- Quarantee a free and active participation of civil society and free civil society space, as well as promote cooperation with civil society.
- Quarantee an enabling environment for the work of human rights defenders so that they can work safely and without fear and harassment. Particular attention should be given to women human rights defenders.
- Support and promote the implementation of the Guidelines on the Protection of the Human Rights Defenders published by ODIHR as well as guiding documents on freedom of peaceful assembly.
- Support the work of the OSCE independent institutions and their strong and independent mandates.

I hope that the discussion in the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting will be fruitful and useful.

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