



Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting

on The Role of Civil Society in the Promotion and Protection of International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law

**22-23 April, 2024
Vienna**

FINAL REPORT



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The first Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting of 2024 provided a forum to discuss the role of civil society in promoting and protecting international human rights law (IHRL) and international humanitarian law (IHL).

Participants focused on three key areas. In the first session participants discussed the essential role of civil society organizations (CSOs) and human rights defenders (HRDs) in monitoring IHRL and IHL, emphasizing their importance particularly in times of conflict and humanitarian crisis to document violations and help towards ensuring accountability. While acknowledging that states have primary responsibility to protect human rights and remedy human rights violations, the second session addressed the role of CSOs and HRDs in the promotion and protection of IHRL and IHL rights in times of conflict and humanitarian crisis. The third session addressed the significant threats faced by HRDs in the OSCE region, focusing on the impact of these challenges on both their security and ability to carry out their work effectively. The session also considered the growing number of HRDs being forced into exile, underlining the importance of international support for them to continue their work abroad.

260 individuals registered to participate in the meeting. The event brought together 180 attendees (71 men, 108 women) including, 94 representatives of 45 pSs, 2 representatives of 2 international organizations, 63 representatives of 48 CSOs, as well as 28 participants from OSCE institutions and field missions, National Human Rights Institutions and other participants.



Mr. Georgy Dzhibladze, President, Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights, delivering his keynote address during the SHDM Opening Session on 22 April 2024

2. SYNOPSIS OF THE SESSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OPENING SESSION

Opening remarks:

H.E. Ambassador Natasha Meli Daudey, Permanent Representative of Malta to the OSCE and Chair of the Permanent Council

Mr. Matteo Mecacci, Director, OSCE/ODIHR

Introductory address

H.E. The Former President of Malta Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, Special Representative of the Chairperson in Office on Civil Society

Keynote addresses:

Ms. Melinda Reed, Director, International Secretariat, Coalition for the International Criminal Court – CICC

Mr. Georgy Dzhibladze, President, Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights

In the opening session, speakers focused on the role of civil society in promoting and protecting international human rights law (IHRL) and international humanitarian law (IHL) as cornerstone of OSCE commitments. As H.E. Ambassador Natasha Meli Daudey, OSCE Chair of the Permanent Council explained, with the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, OSCE participating States (pSs) recognized the responsibility and obligation to protect and respect human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as the rights of civil society to participate in the protection of human rights by holding governments accountable. Human rights defenders (HRDs) and CSOs play a crucial role in the promotion and protection of IHRL and IHL and in providing accountability for human rights violations and they can only function if they are provided with an enabling environment for their work. The OSCE Chair-in-Office further explained that the role of CSOs is even more significant in times of crises such as the Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine and underlined the importance that civil society must be provided with an enabling environment to effectively deliver on their indispensable role for democracy.

The Director of ODIHR recalled that CSOs and HRDs are crucial in the promotion, protection, and monitoring of IHRL and IHL. Their work is even more important during times of conflict and humanitarian crisis, when they may have access to territories and affected persons that others cannot reach, and can provide an invaluable independent voice. ODIHR is aware of civil society's role in upholding the rights and dignity of asylum seekers, refugees and those fleeing persecution, violence, and crisis. This has certainly been the case following the Russian Federation's military attack against Ukraine. In this regard, HRDs, including journalists, working at the borders, or in active conflict, as well as those outside of their country of origin, remain at the centre of ODIHR's attention.

The Director recalled, however, that the work of HRDs is not without danger. The Budapest 1994 OSCE Ministerial Council Decision emphasizes "the need for protection of HRDs" and this commitment remains relevant today. Current challenges include measures hindering HRDs' work across the OSCE region, including through foreign agents' laws and criminalizing key aspects of HRDs' work, which may lead to their stigmatization and isolation, jeopardizing

their safety and security. In this regard, ODIHR continuously monitors the situation of HRDs and provides expert advice and engages with States and civil society to promote a safe and enabling environment for their work.

In the introductory address, H.E. The Former President of Malta, Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, stated that she was deeply honored to attend the SHDM as the newly appointed Special Representative of the OSCE Chair on Civil Society. She stated that civil society plays a fundamental role for providing security in the OSCE region, with CSOs bringing invaluable expertise and serving as a catalysts for positive change. By engaging with CSOs, she noted that we can address the pressing challenges of our societies and advance peace, security and prosperity for all.

The first keynote speaker, Ms. Reed, representing the Coalition for the International Criminal Court, emphasized the important role that CSOs and HRDs play for assuring accountability for IHRL and IHL violations, through documentation and monitoring of human rights abuses, during and after a conflict, in addition to the various support that CSOs provide to victims and survivors. The introducer also stated that CSOs and HRDs face harassment and challenges that need to be addressed and called for a united stand on protecting the work of civil society.

The second keynote speaker, Mr. Dzhibladze, representing the Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights, expressed concern about the growing pushback against fundamental rights in the OSCE area. He stated that in recent years many CSOs and HRDs have faced restrictions by pSs, such as in Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, the Russian Federation, Belarus, Azerbaijan and Türkiye. A number of CSO members from Belarus and the Russian Federation, who have participated in OSCE events, are imprisoned, in addition to CSO members prosecuted for participating in peaceful protests. He stated that real action is needed to protect HRDs and CSOs, as well as to support Ukrainian CSOs in documenting IHRL and IHL violations.

SESSION I: THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN MONITORING AND ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY FOR VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW AND INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW IN CONFLICT

Introducers

Ms. Raquel Vazquez Llorente, Head of Law & Policy, Technology Threats & Opportunities, WITNESS

Mr. Roman Avramenko, Executive Director, Truth Hounds

Ms. Bahtijan Teregozjina, Human Rights defender and activist (expert on civil society and trial monitoring)

Moderator: Mr. Andrew Gardner, Deputy Head, Human Rights Department, OSCE/ODIHR

The first session focused on the essential role of CSOs and HRDs in monitoring IHRL and IHL and emphasized their importance, particularly in times of conflict and humanitarian crisis, to document violations and help towards ensuring accountability, including by supporting national authorities and international bodies.

The first introducer, Ms. Vazquez Llorente, Head of Law & Policy, Technology Threats & Opportunities, stressed on the importance of the impact of new technologies on the work of

HRDs in crises situations. She stated that currently, AI and human made media not only coexist, but inter-mingle, creating a hybrid human and AI media eco-system, with deep fakes of audio and video challenging our perception of events. For example, a video could be real, but the audio could be synthetic, thus changing our understanding of the event. These developments are impacting the work that CSOs are doing on the ground when documenting human rights crises and international crimes.

The second introducer, Mr. Avramenko, Executive Director of Truth Hounds, explained the landscape of how CSOs in Ukraine are working in conditions of war and full scale invasion, to ensure accountability for international crimes committed in Ukraine. Soon after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Ukrainian CSOs organized themselves into two coalitions, with around 30 CSOs each, “Coalition Ukraine 5 A.M.” and “Coalition Tribunal for Putin”. He further stated that due to the experience Ukrainian CSOs have acquired since 2014 in collecting evidence and working on ensuring accountability, they have been helping Ukrainian law enforcement and prosecutors, as well as the ICC and judicial institutions of individual countries through the universal jurisdiction mechanism, in documenting, investigating, prosecuting and identifying suspects of international crimes.

The third introducer, Ms. Teregozjina, Human Rights defender and activist, recalled that CSOs and HRDs provide for unbiased monitoring of judicial processes, which is an important factor for enhancing the rule of law and the trust in the criminal justice system. Additionally, civil society plays a crucial role in making recommendations, organizing trainings and awareness raising campaigns on the right to a fair trial, in addition to lobbying on changing laws and judicial practices, aiming to enhance transparency, justice and accessibility of the justice system for everyone. She also emphasised the challenges that CSOs and HRDs face in OSCE pSs like Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and the Russian Federation.

Civil society representatives stressed that CSOs and HRDs are important partners of national authorities and international bodies for assuring accountability for IHRL and IHL violations, and should have a role in resolving conflicts and ensuring dialogue. They raised concerns about the challenges that CSOs and HRDs face in monitoring of armed conflicts and humanitarian crises, including of internal domestic crises, and pointed out the gaps that could occur in the justice system when investigating IHRL and IHL crimes. Civil society actors also highlighted the importance of the OSCE Moscow Mechanisms in documenting IHRL and IHL violations in Ukraine, which can be used as evidence in future prosecution.

Recommendations for OSCE participating States:

- Prosecutors of OSCE pSs to use the universal jurisdiction mechanism more actively in order to help Ukraine process over 120.000 cases opened by Ukrainian prosecutors, for which pSs, in coordination with CSOs, should adopt laws that would allow for their more active involvement in universal jurisdiction mechanisms.
- In cooperation with CSOs, create a mechanism for rehabilitation and reparation of victims, including provision of medical and psychological support, and creation of identification mechanisms for victims of IHRL and IHL violations.
- Keep invoking the Moscow Mechanism and keep cooperating with civil society for collecting further evidence of IHRL and IHL violations in Ukraine.
- Support the establishment of an international tribunal on the crime of aggression against Ukraine.

- Support projects and initiatives aimed at integrating and protecting the rights of refugees, especially Roma community members, affected by the aggression against Ukraine.
- Assuring access of CSOs to humanitarian and border areas for the purposes of independent monitoring and delivery of humanitarian aid.
- Develop standard procedures across OSCE pSs for the search of missing migrants, communication with relatives, as well as identification, burial and repatriation of the remains of deceased migrants.
- With support of CSOs, create and execute solutions to help refugees and asylum seekers on the move.
- Investing in stronger detection tools and technology that can assess if content has been AI generated or manipulated, making these tools accessible to researchers and fact-finding missions.
- Invest in the adoption of provenance technology and programmes to bring relevance to CSO-captured content on documenting human rights crises and international crimes.

Recommendations for OSCE institutions and field operations:

- OSCE should provide trainings for CSOs that go on field missions to the de-occupied territories of Ukraine on (i) security, (ii) psychological support, (iii) communication and the use and misuse of new technologies, and (iv) documentation of IHRL and IHL violations.

SESSION II: THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN PROTECTING RIGHTS DURING TIMES OF CONFLICT AND HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

Introducers:

András Léderer, Head of Advocacy, Hungarian Helsinki Committee

Viktoryia Vaitovich, Policy Officer, European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)

Mahmut Can İsal, Istanbul Bar Association

Iryna Datsenko, Project Coordinator, CrimeaSOS

Moderator: Ms. Julia Gebhard, Deputy Head of Democratization Department, OSCE/ODIHR

The second session focused on the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in protecting human rights during conflicts and humanitarian crises. Participants examined the key contributions of CSOs, including monitoring human rights violations, providing legal and humanitarian assistance, advocating for displaced populations, and fostering social cohesion. The session also highlighted the challenges CSOs face, such as government restrictions, legal barriers, funding constraints, and threats to human rights defenders. Additionally, the discussion provided a platform to explore best practices in supporting displaced persons, ensuring accountability for human rights violations, and strengthening collaboration between civil society, international organizations, and OSCE participating States.

The first introducer emphasized that CSOs play a crucial role in filling the gaps left by state authorities in times of crisis. He noted that civil society actors provide humanitarian aid, legal

support, and psychosocial assistance while also documenting human rights violations and advocating for justice. Mr. Léderer underscored that despite their essential role, CSOs are increasingly under pressure due to shrinking civic space, restricted access to affected populations, and targeted harassment by some governments. He urged OSCE participating States to create an enabling environment for CSOs, including legal protections and sustainable funding mechanisms.

The second introducer focused on the challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers, particularly those fleeing Ukraine. Ms. Vaitovich highlighted ECRE's efforts in monitoring the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), which provides protection to displaced Ukrainians in the European Union. She warned that many refugees continue to struggle with access to housing, education, healthcare, and social welfare. She called for the extension of the TPD regime and the development of post-temporary protection mechanisms to ensure long-term stability for displaced persons. Ms. Vaitovich also stressed the importance of stronger coordination between state and civil society actors to ensure a rights-based approach to refugee protection.

The third introducer shifted the focus to the humanitarian response following the 2023 earthquakes in Türkiye. Mr. İsal described how civil society organizations rapidly mobilized to provide emergency aid and support to both local communities and refugees affected by the disaster. He noted challenges in coordinating relief efforts, navigating government regulations, and securing sustainable funding. As Türkiye transitions from emergency response to long-term recovery, CSOs continue to play a vital role in advocating for the rights of vulnerable groups, particularly refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Mr. İsal emphasized the importance of localizing humanitarian aid to ensure that grassroots organizations can lead recovery efforts in their own communities.

The fourth introducer provided insights into the evolution of civil society responses to internal displacement in Ukraine. The speaker referred particularly to the situations following the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in 2022. Ms. Datsenko highlighted CrimeaSOS's work in documenting human rights abuses, providing social and legal assistance to displaced persons. She noted that IDPs face multiple barriers to integration, including housing shortages, employment difficulties, and limited access to services. She emphasized the need for increased domestic budget allocations to support IDPs, their inclusion in decision-making processes at the local level as well as stronger international partnerships to sustain humanitarian assistance efforts.

Civil society representatives raised concerns about ongoing human rights violations in conflict-affected regions, including systematic violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, particularly in Ukraine and the Middle East. The plight of stateless and displaced populations in the South Caucasus was also mentioned. Some civil society actors highlighted the gendered impact of conflict, including increased risks of gender-based violence and the need for greater inclusion of women in humanitarian decision-making. Participants also raised the intersection of migration and human rights and called for fair and harmonized integration policies for all displaced persons, not just those under the Temporary Protection Directive.

Delegations and intergovernmental entities acknowledged the crucial role of CSOs in crisis response and stressed the need for stronger cooperation between governments, civil society, and international institutions. A concern over the instrumentalization of migration as a tool for political destabilization was mentioned emphasizing the need for a coordinated international response while reaffirming commitment to assessing asylum applications on a case-by-case

basis. Delegations called for increased accountability mechanisms, particularly regarding war crimes, enforced disappearances, and violations against prisoners of war.

Recommendations for OSCE Participating States:

- To ensure the protection of CSOs and HRDs, including by repealing restrictive laws and safeguarding their right to operate freely.
- To facilitate CSO access to affected populations and ensure their inclusion in decision-making processes related to conflict resolution and humanitarian response.
- To develop long-term strategies for the integration of displaced persons, ensuring sustainable access to housing, education, healthcare, and employment.
- To increase financial and legal support for IDPs, including targeted policies to empower displaced persons to participate in decision-making at the local level.
- To strengthen accountability mechanisms for human rights violations, including supporting international justice processes for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Recommendations for OSCE Institutions and Field Operations:

- To strengthen cooperation with CSOs, ensuring they are meaningfully included in policy discussions and crisis response efforts.
- To enhance human rights monitoring mechanisms, particularly in conflict-affected and occupied territories.
- To support localized humanitarian efforts, prioritizing partnerships with grassroots organizations and refugee-led initiatives.
- To facilitate multi-stakeholder coordination between states, CSOs, and international organizations to ensure an effective and rights-based approach to humanitarian action.

SESSION III: SHRINKING SPACE: CHALLENGES FACED BY HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE OSCE REGION.

Introducers:

Ms. Waltraud Heller, Project Manager, EU Agency for Fundamental Rights

Ms. Tatiana Glushkova, Lawyer, Human Rights Protection Centre “Memorial”

Ms. Tolekan Ismailova, Director, Human Rights Movement “Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan”

Moderator:

Mr. Konstantine Vardzelashvili, Head, Democratization Department, OSCE/ODIHR

The third session addressed the issue of disproportionate and unjustified restrictions on freedom of association that civil society organizations (CSOs) and human rights defenders (HRDs) face in an increasing number of participating States (pSs). Participants discussed how these measures often lead to stigmatization of HRD’s work, that in some instances, result in tangible risks to their physical safety and security. The session also focused on the challenges faced by HRDs in exile, including difficulties in accessing safe countries, securing residence permits, and continuing their work abroad. Additionally, the role of online spaces, new technologies and networks in sustaining civil society mobilization was explored as a response to these challenges.

The first introducer, Ms. Waltraud Heller, presented key challenges for civic space based on the EU Agency’s for Fundamental Rights study across 27 EU member states, noting that these issues are relevant globally. The challenges include restrictive regulatory frameworks, limited access to decision-making, politically motivated funding cuts, and threats to safety such as online attacks and negative media campaigns. Ms. Heller noted that certain groups of HRDs experience more pressure than others, such as women’s rights defenders, LGBTQI, migrant and environmental rights defenders. She emphasized the need for recognition, legal protection, financial sustainability, and resilience support for HRDs. Ms. Heller also addressed the specific needs of HRDs in exile, including access to rights, recovery support, work permits, integration, and protection from security threats. She remarked that only eight EU member states have full-fledged relocation programs for HRDs at risk. Finally, Ms. Heller briefly covered EU legislative efforts to support civic space.

The second introducer, Ms. Tatiana Glushkova, discussed the tools used by states to pressure civil society, particularly through restrictive legislation. She drew attention to the alarming proliferation of so-called “foreign agents” laws targeting foreign-funded organizations, first enacted in the Russian Federation and adopted in Kyrgyzstan and Serbia, with discussions underway in Georgia and Slovakia. Ms. Glushkova highlighted an individual case of Grigory Melkonyants, co-chair of Russian voters’ rights movement “Golos”, who faces prosecution under such law. The introducer also addressed the misuse of anti-extremist laws to criminalize CSOs and HRDs, such as the labelling of LGBT movement in the Russian Federation as “extremist.” She emphasized the importance of civil society resistance through legal challenges, solidarity, and support for HRDs in exile, who face significant relocation and integration challenges.

The third introducer, Ms. Tolekan Ismailova, stressed the importance of influencing decision-making and repealing laws that restrict the work of CSOs and HRDs, emphasizing the need to end impunity for human rights violations. She noted the global decline in open societies, with less than two per cent of the world's population enjoying full freedom of assembly, association, and expression, a decrease from four per cent five years ago. Ms. Ismailova expressed support for Ukraine and its society suffering from the war, while also noting the negative influence of the Russian Federation on Central Asian countries. The introducer also criticized "foreign representatives" law in Kyrgyzstan, which gives the government power to suspend CSO activities. Special protection for vulnerable groups, including Roma, ethnic minorities, and women HRDs in Central Asia, was also highlighted by the introducer.

During the discussion, numerous participants expressed concern about the increasing repression of civil society in the OSCE region, including restrictions on freedom of expression and the criminalization of dissent. In particular, they pointed out how laws, such as those on "military censorship" in the Russian Federation, were being used to silence critical voices. Several participants expressed concern about increasing pressure on foreign-funded CSOs in several OSCE pSs. The importance of visa and relocation support for CSOs and HRDs at risk, especially for LGBT groups operating in hostile environments, was also emphasized. Some participants pointed to the growing threat of transnational repression faced by HRDs from Belarus and the Russian Federation. Finally, some CSO representatives noted increasing repression of civil society in Central Asian countries, including Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Recommendations for OSCE Participating States:

- To ensure the release and protection of imprisoned HRDs and support HRDs' safety at all costs;
- To strengthen legal frameworks, uphold freedom of expression and association, and support OSCE mechanisms for crisis situations;
- To simplify visa processes for HRDs and provide comprehensive relocation support, including assistance for families and integration in exile;
- To empower CSOs and HRDs through capacity building, funding, and meaningful partnerships with governments and international organizations;
- To promote the inclusion of vulnerable groups, such as women, persons with disabilities, and minorities in decision-making;

Recommendations for OSCE Institutions and Field Operations:

- To support platforms for civil society interaction with OSCE institutions and ensure consultations and engagement with CSOs on the ground, particularly in Central Asia;
- To monitor and address challenges faced by HRDs in exile, including providing training opportunities and supporting solidarity networks;
- To address the situation of HRDs in Kyrgyzstan, including by the initiation of the Moscow Mechanism;
- To address the issue of transnational repression by producing guidelines and recommendations for pSs on eradicating these practices.

CLOSING SESSION

Reports from the working sessions

Closing remarks

Ms. Tea Jaliashvili, First Deputy Director, OSCE/ODIHR

Ms. Deborah M. Borg, *Deputy Permanent Representative, 2024 OSCE Chairpersonship of Malta*

In the closing session, ODIHR's First Deputy Director, Ms. Jaliashvili emphasized the value of the SHDM format, which provided a platform to discuss both the vital role of civil society in promoting and protecting international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL), and the challenges faced by CSOs and individual HRDs in the OSCE region. She stressed the critical role of civil society in protecting the rights of displaced populations during times of conflict and humanitarian crisis. Ms. Jaliashvili pointed out that humanitarian actors are often the only ones able to access conflict zones and must be protected at all times. She noted that the lessons learned and best practices shared at the meeting would serve as a basis for future efforts to protect displaced populations, refugees and asylum-seekers. Ms. Jaliashvili concluded by expressing gratitude to all participants for their contributions and called for translating the discussions and recommendations emerging from the meeting into tangible actions to protect and support civic space and civil society actors.

On behalf of the Maltese Chairpersonship, Ms. Borg underscored the vital role of civil society in promoting and protecting human rights and international law, particularly in times of crisis. She acknowledged the difficult but crucial work done by CSOs and HRDs in documenting violations and ensuring accountability, especially in the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Ms. Borg also pointed out the worrying trend of increasing repression of civil society in many OSCE states and reaffirmed the importance of creating a space where civil society actors can operate freely. Ms. Borg ended by expressing her hope that the recommendations presented at the meeting will serve as relevant guidance for the future.



Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting
on The Role of Civil Society in the Promotion and Protection of
International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law

Vienna, 22-23 April 2024

AGENDA

Day 1

[12.30 – 13.30 – side events]

14.00 – 15.00 **OPENING SESSION**

Opening remarks

H.E. Amb. Natasha Meli Daudey, Permanent Representative of Malta to the OSCE and Chair of the Permanent Council

Mr. Matteo Mecacci, Director, OSCE/ODIHR

Introductory address

H.E. The Former President of Malta Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, Special Representative of the Chairperson in Office on Civil Society

Keynote addresses

Ms. Melinda Reed, Director, International Secretariat, Coalition for the International Criminal Court

Mr. Georgy Dzhibladze, President, Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights

15.00 – 17.00 **SESSION I: The role of civil society in monitoring and ensuring accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in conflict**

Introducers

Ms. Raquel Vazquez Llorente, Head of Law & Policy, Technology Threats & Opportunities, WITNESS

Mr. Roman Avramenko, Executive Director, Truth Hounds

Ms. Bahtijan Teregozjina, Human Rights defender and activist

Moderator: Mr. Andrew Gardner, Deputy Head, Human Rights Department, OSCE ODIHR

[17.30 – 18.30 – side events]

Day 2

[9.00 – 10.00 – side events]

10.30 – 12.30 **SESSION II: The role of civil society in protecting rights during times of conflict and humanitarian crisis**

Introducers

Mr. András Léderer, Head of Advocacy, Hungarian Helsinki Committee

Ms. Viktoryia Vaitovich, Policy Officer, European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)

Mr. Mahmut Can İsal, Istanbul Bar Association

Ms. Iryna Datsenko, Project Co-ordinator, CrimeaSOS

Moderator: Ms. Julia Gebhard, Deputy Head, Democratization Department, OSCE/ODIHR

[13.15 – 14.15 – side events]

14.30 – 16.30 **SESSION III: Shrinking space: challenges faced by human rights defenders and civil society in the OSCE region**

Introducers

Ms. Waltraud Heller, Project Manager, EU Agency for Fundamental Rights

Ms. Tatiana Glushkova, Lawyer, Human Rights Protection Centre “Memorial”

Ms. Tolekan Ismailova, Director, Human Rights Movement "Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan"

Moderator: Mr. Konstantine Vardzelashvili, Head, Democratization Department, OSCE/ODIHR

16.30 – 17.30 **CLOSING SESSION**

Reports from the working sessions

Comments from the floor

Closing remarks

Ms. Tea Jaliashvili, First Deputy Director, OSCE/ODIHR

Ms. Deborah M. Borg, Deputy Permanent Representative of Malta to the OSCE

17.30 Closing of the meeting

ANNEX II: LIST OF SIDE EVENTS: Topics and Conveners

Persecution of Ukrainian Civilians in the Occupied Territories as Crime Against Humanity: Civil Society's Efforts in Restoring Justice

Convened by: Human Rights Centre ZMINA

Current issues with humanitarian mechanisms in the EU for the Russian society

Convened by: Movement of Conscientious Objectors

Unveiling Intent: Investigating Mens Rea in the context of the forcible transfer of Ukrainian Children by Russia

Convenor: Netherlands Helsinki Committee

Violations of the rights of Russian-speaking citizens of the European Union. Problems and opportunities for German civil society to protect them.

Convenor: Association to prevent discrimination and exclusion of Germans from Russia

Challenges of ensuring justice in Ukraine for the victims of war crimes and motivating them on the national level

Convenor: Media Initiative for Human Rights

Together for Accountability: The Role of National and International Civil Society in Holding Russian Perpetrators to Account for International Crimes in Ukraine

Convenor: International Partnership for Human Rights

Civilian prisoners. Persecution of dissidents in Ukraine and the possibilities of civil society to protect them

Convenor: Information Group on Crimes against the Person

ANNEX III: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION: Speakers, Introducers and Moderators

Opening session

H.E. Ambassador Natasha Meli Daudey, Permanent Representative of Malta to the OSCE and Chair of the Permanent Council is also the Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations and to the International Organisations based in Vienna, as well as Ambassador of Malta to Austria. Ambassador Meli Daudey is a career diplomat with over 20 years of experience in bilateral and multilateral affairs. Prior to her current appointment, Ms Meli Daudey served as Malta's Ambassador to Poland and non-resident Ambassador to Georgia, Moldova, Belarus and Armenia. In 2014, she was appointed Deputy Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, covering the Security Council. She also previously served in the Embassy of Malta in France, and as Antici in the Permanent Representation of Malta to the European Union prior to and following Malta's accession.

Mr. Matteo Mecacci is Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), since December 2020. Prior to that he spent 7 years as President of the International Campaign for Tibet. He headed the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission to Georgia in 2013 and was a Member of the Italian Parliament, Foreign Affairs Committee and of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly from 2008– 2013. From 2000 to 2008 he was Representative to the United Nations in New York of “No Peace Without Justice” and the “Transnational Radical Party”. He holds a JD in International Law at the University of Florence.

H.E. The Former President of Malta Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, Special Representative of the Chairperson in Office on Civil Society served in politics for 45 years and was a Member of Parliament for 16 years. She was the very first elected female General Secretary of one of the two main political parties in Malta. Coleiro Preca also served at the Council of Europe. As Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity, she initiated numerous social reforms. The Maltese Parliament unanimously elected Ms Coleiro Preca as President of Malta in 2014 and served till 2019. Coleiro Preca founded and chairs The Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, The Malta Trust Foundation, The Emanuele Cancer Research Foundation Malta, and Fondazzjoni Nazareth. President Emeritus Coleiro Preca is the President of Eurochild and the Mediterranean Children's Movement, and was selected as the CiO's Special Representative on Civil Society for Malta's Chairpersonship in 2024.

Ms. Melinda Reed is the Director, International Secretariat, Coalition for the International Criminal Court – CICC a global network of civil society organizations working in 150 countries to ensure justice for the victims of serious international crimes.

Mr. Georgy Dzhibladze is the Founder and president of the Center for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights, a Russian public policy and advocacy NGO. He is a specialist in human rights, international law, and civil society, and an active member of the Russian and international NGO community. He is a co-founder and member of the Coordination Committee of the Civic Solidarity Platform, an OSCE-wide NGO Coalition.

Session I

Ms. Bahtijan Teregozjina is President of the Public Foundation "Ar.Rukh.Hak". A human rights defender and expert working in the field of lawfulness and the protection of political rights and freedoms. In 1999, she began promoting the development of non-governmental

organizations in Kazakhstan. In 2000, she initiated the creation of a network of human rights organizations operating in various areas of democracy and human rights protection. In 2001, she conducted a national advocacy campaign to restore the Constitutional Court. In 2004, she initiated the youth movement "Kahar" for change, which became the most popular student group with its activities leading to the creation of many new youth organizations. In 2005, she organized the Alliance of Non-Governmental Organizations to monitor parliamentary elections. In 2007, she conducted summer schools of democracy for students and youth; established a national movement of student ombudsmen. In 2009, she implemented a program in universities for legal education, raising the level of legal culture, and informing students about jury trials in connection with the introduction of the jury system in Kazakhstan. In 2012, she was one of the founders of the Coalition of Public Organizations "Sailau" for observing elections to the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan. She promotes the right to peaceful assembly. She participated in the development of the draft alternative law "On the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan", the draft law "On Elections in the Republic of Kazakhstan", and the draft law "On Peaceful Assemblies". Since 2012 to the present, she has been implementing the project: "Alliance Tirek" – humanitarian and legal assistance, monitoring of political persecutions, and support for political prisoners in Kazakhstan. She is a member of the expert council on granting the status of "political prisoner" and "prisoner of conscience". Following the January 2022 tragedy, she was involved in documenting the victims and deceased in 9 cities of Kazakhstan, for which she was awarded the U.S. Secretary of State's International Women of Courage Award on March 8, 2023, in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Roman Avramenko has been working as a human rights defender from the beginning of Russia's invasion in 2014. Since then, he documents war crimes and crimes against humanity for the ICC, national and foreign accountability mechanisms. During his work Roman has completed more than 70 field missions to Eastern Ukraine, Crimea, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) with purpose to document and investigate international crimes. Roman is also a co-author of several reports regarding war crimes in eastern Ukraine including four submissions to the ICC. In 2018 Roman has become the executive director of the Truth Hounds, human rights organisation. Roman has developed a training module on documenting international crimes and other grave human rights violations and trained more than 200 human rights defenders in Ukraine, Syria, Armenia, Tajikistan, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Moldova on how to collect witness testimonies, analyse impact craters, produce photo and video as evidence, collect physical evidence. He has also trained and mentored more than 100 Ukrainian prosecutors and investigators to enhance quality of domestic justice in persecution for committing the conflict-related crimes.

Ms. Raquel Vazquez Llorente is a lawyer specialising in digital evidence in conflict and human rights crises. She's an Associate Director at WITNESS, where she leads a team that critically examines the impact of emerging technologies, especially generative AI, on our trust in audio-visual media. Her policy portfolio also focuses on the operational and regulatory challenges related to the retention and disclosure of social media content that may be probative of international crimes. Prior to WITNESS, Raquel was the Permanent Representative to the International Criminal Court for FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights). With over a decade of experience in issues related to the verification and provenance of digital content, Raquel played a pivotal role in building eyeWitness, an award-winning organization incubated by the International Bar Association that developed technology to authenticate audio-visual evidence for legal use. Her work facilitated the adoption of new technologies in Central America, the Middle East, Africa, and Eastern Europe, contributing to the success of

the first court case that employed controlled-capture authentication technology—marking a significant advancement in trials for mass atrocities.

Session II

Mr. András Léderer is Head of Advocacy at the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, a leading human rights organisation based in Budapest, Hungary. He joined the HHC in September 2015, originally working in its Refugee Programme. Prior to this, he studied security studies at Aberystwyth University and SOAS. He assisted IDPs in Georgia during Russia's invasion in 2008, and continues to help displaced communities and civil society in Georgia until today. Besides his tasks related to the international advocacy work of the HHC on the rule of law, criminal justice, and international protection, András continues to work on documenting often violent collective expulsions at the Hungarian-Serbian border and contributes to the organisation's strategic litigation efforts on this issue. András developed and delivered training and workshops on issues related to human rights monitoring, advocacy, and security and resilience of human rights defenders and civil society organisations for a wide range of stakeholders in Europe and Africa, among others, for UNHCR, OHCHR, and OSCE-ODIHR. András is a recognised expert on evidence gathering on human rights violations at borders and regularly provides training, consultancy and assistance to civil society actors and legal practitioners on these topics.

Mr. Mahmut Can İsal, a seasoned lawyer with years of experience advising NGOs and intergovernmental organizations on human rights issues. As a human rights lawyer, he offers consultancy and training services to national and international NGOs, academic institutions, and international intergovernmental organizations. His expertise spans various legal areas, including civil society relations, advocacy, legal protection, refugee protection, combating child labor, child protection, migration labor, and NGO governance. Mahmut specializes in developing and delivering training courses on Turkish law and NGOs, in addition to leading advocacy projects with civil society organizations. He holds a law degree from Istanbul Bilgi University and is currently pursuing a master's degree in human rights law at the same institution. Mahmut is registered with the Istanbul Bar Association since 2014 and is fluent in both English and Turkish.

Dr. Viktoriya Vaitovich is a Policy Officer at the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) – an alliance of 122 NGOs across 40 European countries, with its Secretariat based in Brussels, Belgium. She is leading ECRE's advocacy on the EU's response to displacement from Ukraine. Viktoriya holds a PhD in Migration Studies as well as a postgraduate degree in European Interdisciplinary Studies from the College of Europe. Viktoriya has experience in the intergovernmental sector and has also participated in international election observation missions.

Ms. Iryna Datsenko is a Project manager, head of analytical department of NGO CRIMEASOS. Iryna has two higher educations in the field of management, the last of which is NGO Management. Has more than 12 years of experience in civil society organizations. Professional interests: creation and implementation of projects that are beneficial for society; mentoring of civil society organizations.

Session III

Ms. Waltraud Heller leads the work on civic space and human rights defenders at the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). She joined the Agency's precursor organisation, the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) in 2005 and was head of communications before becoming the Agency's spokesperson. Since 2014, she has been working on civil society and civic space issues. Before joining FRA, she worked for a humanitarian aid NGO, as a speechwriter for a European Commissioner, for the European Trade Union Confederation, and for the Wall Street Journal Europe. Waltraud Heller holds a master's degree in social and economic sciences, and a postgraduate diploma in European studies from the College of Europe, Bruges.

Ms. Tatiana Glushkova represents Memorial Human Rights Defence Centre, an NGO founded by the supporters of the liquidated Human Rights Centre “Memorial”. In 2022, Memorial was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. A graduate of the Lomonosov Moscow State University, Tatiana Glushkova (F, Russia) has been engaged in human rights work since 2011 and in 2015 joined the Human Rights Centre “Memorial”. As a human rights defender she represented victims of gravest and most systematic human rights violations in Russia, such as enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings and torture in the North Caucasus, both before national courts and the ECHR. She also defended peaceful protesters, journalists, opposition politicians and human rights defenders persecuted by the authorities. Tatiana’s work on minority rights resulted in a landmarking judgment in which the ECHR had for the first time found a violation of the prohibition of discrimination because of a person’s gender identity. Recently, Tatiana has been heavily involved in defending Memorial in court proceedings against liquidation claims by the Russian authorities.

Ms. Tolekan Ismailova, Director, Human Rights Movement "Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan", an organization focusing on raising awareness about the rights of vulnerable groups, promoting women leadership, reforming the penitentiary system and criminal law, defending human rights activists. Ms. Ismailova is also an Executive Secretary of the Kyrgyzstan NGOs Forum. Founding president of Kyrgyzstan's Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society and the founder of the NGO Forum. In 2012, after the projection of the documentary “I am gay, I am a Muslim,” Tolekan was declared “an extremist and a promoter of interethnic and interreligious conflicts.” She was elected vice-president of the International Federation for Human Rights in 2013 and was an honorary member of the International Youth Movement. In 2022, Ms. Ismailova was elected as a member of the Executive Committee of the Forum Asia and is a representative at the Global Network for Civil Society Organizations for Disaster Reduction in Central Asia.

Closing session

Dr. Tea Jaliashvili is ODIHR First Deputy Director. She has extensive experience in strategic policy development, management and administration of technical co-operation programmes in the fields of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, within international, national and non-governmental organizations. Before joining ODIHR, she was acting Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe. She previously served as Deputy Director at the Women’s Information Center in Georgia and was deeply engaged in strengthening the capacity of civil society to protect women’s rights and advance gender equality. She has also worked for the UN, Council of Europe and EU joint initiatives in a number of regions. Dr. Jaliashvili has worked towards achieving peace and a just society based on principles of good governance and rule of law through her contribution to legislative changes as well as policy and institutional development, including strengthening and harmonising the work of the judiciary and National Human Rights Institutions. She has Master Degree in International Human Rights Law, she

holds doctorates in medicine and philosophy (MD-PhD) and is fluent in Georgian (native), English, Russian and French.

Ms Deborah Maria Borg, Counsellor and Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Malta & Permanent Mission of Malta to the OSCE and International Organisations in Vienna. She previously served at Malta's High Commission to the Court of St James', in London (2019-2020); Malta's Embassy to the French Republic, in Paris (2014-2017) as well as at Malta's Permanent Representation to the United Nations in Geneva (2011-2014). During her stints at HQ in Valletta, she always formed part of the Directorate responsible for European Affairs, covering the various desks and pertinent issues, most notably EU enlargement. Ms Borg holds a Masters' Degree in Diplomatic Studies from the University of Malta and is fluent in Italian, French and German, apart from her native Maltese and English