

Address by Przemysław Grudziński
Under-Secretary of State
in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland

at the Opening Session
of the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
(Warsaw, September 29, 2008)

Mister Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome all of you on behalf of Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, Mr. Radosław Sikorski in Warsaw at the 2008 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting.

Let me welcome very warmly Ms Teija Tiilikainen, the Secretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland representing the Chairman- in- Office of the OSCE, the Secretary General of the Organisation Mr. Marc Perrin de Brichambaut and the Heads of two crucial OSCE institutions operating within the Human Dimension: High Commissioner on National Minorities Mr. Knut Vollebaek and the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr. Miklos Haraszti.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that Poland is proud to host again the HDIM. It is of particular proudness and satisfaction for us to be the host state for the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights headquarters that has become one of the leading centers of the international discussion devoted to the human rights situation in the euro – atlantic area.

It has to be stressed that over the years the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting itself has come to be recognized as one of the most significant fora dedicated to this sphere. It is encouraging that each year we notice the growing number of participants in the discussion and we touch upon new risks and challenges emerging within the Human Dimension. I should like to add my voice to those positive comments on the importance of the Meeting we have already heard. Indeed, while preparing for this Meeting I was struck by the comprehensiveness of the agenda, the number of issues to be tackled and expectations that are linked to the Meeting.

I am convinced all of these achievements could not be accomplished without enormous amount of work and devotion of the ODIHR, its Director, Ambassador Lenarcic and his predecessors. My country values the Office and its activities as one of the most remarkable OSCE achievements. Its role in promotion of international norms and standards and the continuous support for the participating

states in the implementation of the OSCE commitments deserves our recognition and full respect. In whole spectrum of the activities in the field of human rights, including election observation, the Office is able to act in impartial, competent way, avoiding to the maximum extent possible to be politically entangled.

My deep conviction that the HDIM is a gathering of special importance results also from the huge number of NGOs registered for participation in the Meeting. The opportunity to take part in the Meeting on an equal footing offered to the representatives of civil society is the OSCE trademark. It enriches significantly our discussion and helps achieving the aims of the Meeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen

In 2008 we celebrate 60th anniversary of the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which paved the way for the rapid development of human rights standards in various international fora, among them the Council of Europe in the Western part of our continent and later on the OSCE in the euro – atlantic area. I am confident that this anniversary will give us additional motivation to use the upcoming two weeks in a proper and efficient way. However, we should constantly bear in mind that at the end of the road it is the real life that makes difference between the theory and practice and those sixty years of experience behind us clearly demonstrated there is a gap between the two approaches and that this gap is unfortunately too wide.

One has to remember that the relationship between human rights and international security nowadays is crucial as it has always been the case, but it is also evolving. Now, a critical factor in this evolution is the future role of the OSCE in the euro – atlantic space and the ability of this organisation to sustain and further develop a regional pattern and standards that transcend the lowest common denominator.

For years it has been taken for granted that respect for human rights was one of major contributions to the process of strengthening of both national and international security. Today this kind of linkage although still valid as a rule, is being occasionally blurred when for the sake of security and safety of the entire population and because of terrorist threats some human rights, to put it mildly, are not fully observed.

Really big and still growing problem is human rights of all kinds of refugees and internally displaced persons.

There are so called weak states, which cannot control situation on their territories.

All those factors contribute to the complexity of all Human Dimension issue, making OSCE work in that regard on the one hand even more important, while on the other – simply more difficult and complicated.

Decades ago OSCE Human Dimension served as a humanitarian and political weapon used to help defeat totalitarian communist regimes and thus to end Cold War divisions. Now Human Dimension provisions should continue to help building bridges between different nations and cultures. A part and parcel of this process is also the accountability of those who do not observe and follow these provisions, even

if keeping someone accountable in that regard would have been at odds with political correctness, being at the same time in line with truth and moral sense of responsibility. To use somewhat lighter tone, if something walks like a duck, quacks like a duck and looks like a duck, please do not hesitate to call it a duck.

Your deliberations here in Warsaw will have to strike the right balance between the letter and spirit of OSCE Human Dimension rules, between pressing political needs and long-term strategic requirements, between the interests of states and their citizens. In my view a criterion of pivotal importance here should be the need to defend with entire OSCE strength the dignity of human being and his/her fundamental freedoms.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to thank Ambassador Lenarcic and his staff once again for their consistent effort on the preparation of this event.

I wish you fruitful work during the Meeting.

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to confirm that in accordance with the well – established tradition, Polish Foreign Ministry offers a reception to warmly welcome distinguished participants of the Meeting in the more informal gathering. I hope to see you all there this evening.

Thank you for your attention.