



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORT BY ODIHR ON THE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

As delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 13 October 2016

Mr Chair,

This year's HDIM attracted even more participants than previous years. We heard representatives from large international organisations, with welcome expertise. We also heard representatives from small, local organisations, struggling to make themselves heard in their own countries. Organisations that are barely tolerated by their governments and that face difficult, even dangerous, working conditions. Our interaction with civil society is the essence of HDIM. We greatly value their contributions, also when we do not agree with them.

We also value the contributions of all OSCE participating States. We regret that two governments chose to leave the meeting.

There have been worrying reports of harassment against participants at HDIM and their families. This is unacceptable. Human rights defenders have the right to communicate with and take part in international bodies. Intimidation of participants represents an attack on the OSCE itself. All participating States must refrain from reprisals, and protect participants and their families from attacks by non-state actors.

Mr Chair,

We are concerned by the many Human Rights challenges facing citizens in several countries. Restrictions on freedom of expression, closure or government control of media outlets, problems with registration of organisations or permissions to assemble, as well as abuse of the justice system, are used to suppress dissenting groups or individuals. These restrictions not only violate the rights of citizens, they will be a source of discontent and instability, and thereby a threat to security.

Mr Chair,

HDIM is an intense event, and can be an inspiration for our work. Good speakers and interesting side events add to our discussions. But issues raised must be followed up throughout the year. Some topics will hopefully be followed up in our preparations for the Ministerial Council in Hamburg. Some can be raised in the Permanent Council. Participating States can report in the Human Dimension Committee or in special meetings. Reporting on implementation is a sign of taking our commitments seriously.

Mr Chair,

ODIHR has once again organised a successful meeting with good speakers and discussions. They have tackled practical challenges by following their mandate. ODIHR's professionalism and unbiased approach is a great strength for our organisation.

Let me conclude by thanking the German chairmanship, the host government and Director Link and his staff for their efforts.

Thank you, Mr Chair