



Address by Ambassador Janez Lenarčič
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885th Meeting of the Permanent Council
Vienna, 27 October 2011

Check against delivery!

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure and honour to address the Permanent Council today and report to you on the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting which took place between 26th September and the 7th of October 2011 in Warsaw, Poland.

This was the first HDIM after the Review Conference of 2010 and the adoption of the Astana Commemorative Declaration which became a significant addition to the set of OSCE Human Dimension Commitments.

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Just like in previous years, the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting proved to be a highly popular event attracting over 1000 participants of whom over 500 were from non-governmental organizations. With regard to the latter - to the NGOs - I would like to note that geographical representation of NGOs was balanced, and the impressions or allegations - there were a few - that HDIM attendance of western NGOs was low

proved to be unjustified. We did research, which showed that there were 218 NGOs represented from the west and 194 NGOs from the east. I believe that active participation, both of representatives of governments and civil society, is a testament to the relevance of the HDIM in the OSCE area. Not only does the HDIM serve as a basis for a peer-review of the human dimension commitments, but it also provides a platform for dialogue, networking and partnership. .

The 56 side events organized by various participants provided good opportunities for freer and informal discussions. Provoking interesting debates, they remain a very popular tool for advocacy and lobbying for highly pressing human dimension issues.

Overall, I believe that the meeting was successful. Nevertheless, as always, there is room for improvement. Hence we welcome constructive ideas about Human Dimension events with a view toward making them more efficient. We were glad to support the study on the Human Dimension events within the margins of the HDIM.

To report on some statistical data, I should draw your attention to the dynamics of interventions delivered by different

participants at working sessions. I would like to highlight, in ascending order of popularity, the top five sessions of this HDIM which had the highest numbers of interventions. Occupying fifth place was the session on **Rule of Law II**, that dealt with, in particular, the abolition of capital punishment, prevention of torture, and protection of human rights and fighting terrorism. Next, fourth place, was the **Freedom of expression, free media and information** session. This was followed by the session on **Tolerance and Non-Discrimination**, while the second place went to the session on **Fundamental Freedoms II**, which consisted of Freedom of assembly and association, National human rights institutions and the role of civil society in the human rights protection, and Human rights education. The most popular session of this HDIM, which had the highest number of interventions, was the session on **Fundamental Freedoms I: Freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief**.

This is just statistics, but I believe it provides participating States with useful information for reviewing existing modalities so that in the future, this event better meets the expectations and interests of participants.

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Moving on to substance, I wish to draw your attention to the keynote address delivered by Ms. Khadija Chérif, the Tunisian activist and the Secretary General of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). Her inspiring speech set the tone for the whole course of the HDIM. Underlining the immense impact of the events in the Arab region, she wisely noted that if democracy is guaranteed, stability and security will follow. This directly relates to the inter-dependence of all three OSCE dimensions. Putting great emphasis on the work and safety of civil society, Ms. Chérif reminded the OSCE participating States that their commitment to protect human rights defenders would help them build democracy in the name of stability and a better future.

Moreover, as you remember, the events in the Arab region took place just weeks after the adoption of the Astana Commemorative Declaration, in which the participating States proclaimed, yet again, that “the security of the OSCE area is inextricably linked to that of adjacent areas, notably in the Mediterranean and in Asia. We must therefore enhance the level of our interaction with our Partners for Co-operation.”

It is my hope that participating States will heed this appeal made at the Astana Summit and decide at the Ministerial Council in Vilnius to enhance our co-operation with the Partners.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to report to you on the main highlights of the working sessions:

- The session on **Freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief** touched upon three main themes. First, minority religious communities are still being harassed and discriminated against in many parts of the OSCE region. Second, the registration of religious communities – which should facilitate the freedom of religion or belief – is in fact being used to the opposite end, that is increasingly as a tool to seek control over those communities. Third, there is a worrying trend of banning unregistered practice of religion or belief through restrictive implementation of existing legislation or adoption of new, more restrictive, laws.

- **Freedom of assembly and association** remains high on our agenda as it continues to be unduly restricted in a number of OSCE participating states. ODIHR has been asked to continue and expand its work in these areas through monitoring, promotion of existing tools, and the development of new ones.

- In the session on **tolerance and non-discrimination**, participants repeatedly underlined the responsibility of States to respond to hate crimes. States have been called to step up their efforts in implementing OSCE commitments. Some participants noted the deficit of hard data on hate crimes and related phenomena – something we also note in ODIHR in the uneven responses to our questionnaires.

- **Freedom of expression and freedom of the media** session discussed a basic paradox: while technological developments offer increasing opportunities to receive and disseminate pluralistic information, many governments take restrictive actions to curb people's access to this information. The Representative on Freedom of the Media used the forum to repeat her strong rejection of violence against journalists and called

for the political support of all governments to help prevent such violence.

- At the **Rule of Law** session several participating States reported having introduced legislative, administrative and de facto measures to eradicate **torture** in their countries. However, reports from civil society, at the same session, suggested that use of torture continues. With regard to **capital punishment**, as in previous years, participants called for a moratorium on the death penalty and urged the remaining participating States that apply capital punishment to abolish this practice. The need to protect human rights and rule of law while **combating terrorism**, as well as to reject the identification of terrorism with any religion, was also strongly reaffirmed during the HDIM.

Other key messages from the HDIM discussions included the following:

- The **freedom of movement** session brought up the issues of visa liberalization for freer cross-border travel, and problems with excessive use of detention of

internally displaced, migrants, and refugees. Many participants also highlighted the restrictions on travel of human rights defenders and journalists, including those seeking to monitor the implementation of human dimension commitments in other participating States.

- In the course of the working session on **election observation**, some participating States challenged the existing ODIHR election observation methodology, while many others declared their support for it and for ODIHR's work to carry out the election observation mandate. It was stressed that Needs Assessment Missions and follow-up to recommendations are essential pillars of the observation process.

- The session on **human dimension activities** highlighted some areas for potential OSCE activities, including support of human rights defenders' work as well as prioritization of work according to those commitments which are most violated.

- At the sessions on **Roma and Sinti issues**, many speakers addressed the issue of the emergence of

extremists and/or radical political parties and the need to address hate speech and intolerance against Roma and Sinti.

- The session on **national minorities** was introduced by the High Commissioner on National Minorities who focused on effective participation by persons belonging to national minorities in public life and related issues relevant for formulating, implementing and monitoring evidence-based and targeted policies. The importance of continued HCNM involvement, especially in volatile regions, was stressed, as was the need for overall OSCE engagement to counter manifestations of extreme nationalism.

- In the area of **equality of opportunity for women and men**, it was suggested that OSCE take a stronger stand in recommending positive measures to promote women's participation in political and decision-making processes. Participants pointed out that violence against women still prevails and remains a worrying trend in the OSCE region. It was recommended that ODIHR engagement is expanded, also in those OSCE participating States that do not host field missions.

- And finally, the session on trafficking in human beings emphasized the importance of early and effective access to legal aid for victims of **trafficking**. In addition, the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, called for more effective coordination of the various anti-trafficking initiatives.

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Ladies and gentlemen,

This was a very brief summary of the two-week HDIM proceedings in Warsaw. I would like to stop here and allow you to make your own assessment of the HDIM after studying the HDIM consolidated summary. Following usual practice, the summary was distributed to all of you on a CD-ROM. Most importantly, this CD-ROM contains all the recommendations made by different stakeholders. I trust that these recommendations will help the Chairmanship, the incoming

Chairmanship and all participating States in reviewing our activities and preparing the agenda for next year.

I wish to acknowledge the important value added by civil society to all human dimension events. Like in previous years, requests were put forward to restrict the NGO participation. I wish to assure you that in dealing with such issues, ODIHR strictly followed the provisions of the Helsinki Document of 1992.

I would like to thank the Lithuanian Chairmanship and everyone who contributed their efforts to this successful HDIM. We look forward to working with you, and in particular, the incoming Irish Chairmanship on following up on the key messages and recommendations which came out of the HDIM discussions.

My report about HDIM is completed at this point. But, Mr. Chairman, I would like to take this opportunity, in light of the urgency of the matter, to report to you on the following:

It is now Thursday afternoon in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan and at this point, which is less than 2.5 days before the elections, our Election Observation Mission reports that 67 short-term

observers still have not been accredited. This includes: 23 from Germany, 13 from Spain, 11 from USA, 7 from Russia, 4 from France, 3 from Norway, 1 from the Slovak Republic, 1 from Sweden, 1 from Switzerland, 1 from Belgium, 1 from Ireland, and 1 from Moldova.

I would like to appeal to the government of Kyrgyzstan through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the delegation in Vienna and you, Madam [Ambassador and Head of Permanent Delegation of the Kyrgyz Republic to the OSCE], to make every effort to achieve the accreditation of the remaining short-term observers so that they could do their work on Sunday. Their purpose is to help Kyrgyzstan.

Thank you.