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Opening of this year's OSCE Human Dimension  
Implementation Meeting  
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I am delighted to have been invited to Warsaw to open this year's OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting with you today.

Allow me first of all to thank the Serbian Chairmanship for its tireless commitment to the OSCE this year. We all know how complex the tasks facing the chairmanship are – especially in these times.

For that, you deserve our greatest respect.

I would also like to thank ODIHR Director Michael Link and his team most sincerely for their dedicated and professional preparatory work for this meeting here in Warsaw. I know that this always involves a great deal of work.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The previous speakers touched briefly upon the development of crises in Europe and the importance of human rights and the Human Dimension.

I would like to add to this the perspective of Germany – the future OSCE Chair.

Right now, we are in the middle of the worst crisis facing Europe's security order since the end of the Cold War.

The annexation of Crimea in violation of international law and Russia's actions in the Ukraine conflict threaten European security in all of its facets, and therefore also the fundamental principles and achievements of the CSCE process and the OSCE.

These actions are therefore also threatening the very existence and implementation of obligations in the area of human rights and fundamental freedoms, which are an integral part of what the OSCE stands for.

However, the crisis has reminded us just how valuable the OSCE is for Europe's security policy architecture.

**First, the OSCE is invaluable as an operative instrument of conflict management:**

The assistance provided by the organisation in context of the Ukraine crisis – the Special Monitoring Mission, the Trilateral Contact Group, the Observer Mission at the Ukrainian–Russian border and the Project Coordination Unit in Ukraine – is impressive and beyond doubt.

Ladies and gentlemen,

**Second, the crisis also shows us how important the OSCE is as the guardian of the acquis of obligations and principles.**

To our mind, the principles of the Helsinki Final Act are just as relevant today as they were 40 years ago: the principles of the inviolability of frontiers, territorial integrity and the peaceful settlement of disputes between states, as

well as non-intervention in internal affairs and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Since Helsinki, the area of human rights and fundamental freedoms – the “Human Dimension” – has evolved into a comprehensive acquis of shared norms, standards and obligations and is, to our mind, a cornerstone of European security.

Current events in and around Ukraine have not only called principles such as the inviolability of frontiers into question, but have also put human rights, fundamental freedoms and principles of democratic governance increasingly in the firing line.

These events thus underscore the significance and importance of this OSCE acquis as a body of shared obligations.

After all – and I firmly believe this to be true – common security and dialogue in the spirit of trust are only possible if a common set of rules is adhered to.

These politically binding rules apply equally to all OSCE participating States. They are and remain the irrevocable foundation of our cooperation that we must defend and reinforce.

In the Document of the Moscow Meeting of 1991, the participating States used strikingly clear language to enshrine their collective determination to cooperate with each other.

The declaration ran as follows – and I quote:

“They [the participating States] categorically and irrevocably declare that the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension of the CSCE are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned.”

All participating States reaffirmed this to the letter at the OSCE Summit in Astana in 2010.

This far-reaching voluntary commitment and the willingness to engage in critical dialogue with others also on developments in participating States' own countries was an expression of the common objective of the Charter of Paris, which reads:

“Our States will co-operate and support each other with the aim of making democratic gains irreversible.”

This aim should remain the guidepost for our actions.

Our intention here is not to exert unreasonable pressure on individual countries, but rather to call for these common values and obligations to be adhered to as we believe in the vital importance of these values and obligations for security and stability in the OSCE area.

Ladies and gentlemen,

**ODIHR** does extremely valuable work to help OSCE countries implement the standards that they set for themselves. Next year, ODIHR will be marking 25 years since its establishment. We want to celebrate this anniversary in the firm belief that “human rights and fundamental freedoms are the birthright of all human beings, are inalienable and are guaranteed by law.” That is what we established in the Charter of Paris back in 1990.

The **High Commissioner on National Minorities** and her predecessors have also set important standards. The constructive coexistence of the majority and national minorities was fostered with silent diplomacy and landmark recommendations.

Among the milestones to be celebrated in the coming year, we will be marking the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities. We should also pay tribute to this together.

An eminently important institution is, last but not least, the **Representative on Freedom of the Media** – a post that was created in 1997 at the instigation of Germany, among others, and whose first incumbent was the German Freimut Duve.

The independence and security of journalists is, unfortunately, all too often in the firing line at the present, and I believe that we have a greater need for this institution than ever before.

Dunja Mijatović deserves our utmost respect for her dedicated and independent work in this role.

The Serbian Chairmanship and the upcoming German Chairmanship will work with all participating States to nominate a suitable successor from 2016.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have pinpointed the Human Dimension as part of what the OSCE stands for.

Germany intends to preserve and strengthen this very essence.

This also entails the provision of sufficient financial resources for the institutions that comprise the Human Dimension.

During the current OSCE budget negotiations, we should therefore bear in mind that sufficient resources are required in order to get on top of security policy challenges, particular those that we currently face.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to turn to the **third decisive function** that I believe the OSCE fulfils, namely its **role as a dialogue platform**.

Of course, public pressure and other means may also be necessary if people are not protected from infringements of their rights and fundamental freedoms.

The **centrepieces** of the OSCE's focus on conflict prevention remain **dialogue and cooperation**, however.

This is why the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) is so very important, particularly at this time of fundamental crisis.

As the largest human rights conference in Europe and the entire OSCE area, the meeting – as a forum for dialogue on an equal footing between countries and civil society – is our central mechanism for reviewing the implementation of our human rights obligations.

We should make the best possible use of this instrument as I do not wish to deny that I regard the state of implementation of OSCE obligations in a number of participating States with great and increasing concern – whether with regard to territorial integrity, the freedom of assembly or the safety of journalists.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We Germans are both delighted and humble to be assuming the OSCE Chairmanship in 2016.

In so doing, we are also taking responsibility for preserving the OSCE's achievements of the past decades, also and especially – and I would like to emphasise this point particularly in the current context – for the obligations in the area of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We intend to use our chairmanship to promote dialogue and avoid further estrangement and lack of communication in the OSCE area.

At the same time, dialogue also means that we will call for obligations to be complied with as well as clearly draw attention to shortcomings.

We want to do our part to strengthen the OSCE's institutions and mechanisms.

And, as the OSCE's portfolio requires, we will focus on a wide spectrum of topics during our chairmanship. We will discuss options for the 2016 agenda in more detail with you all in Warsaw this week.

Allow me to close by emphasising just three priorities:

We intend to give tolerance and non-discrimination the attention they deserve, including perhaps with a special event organised by the chairmanship.

We intend to have a stronger focus on national minorities in order to shed light on their potential as bridge-builders and a force for reconciliation between nations.

And, in these unsettled times, we intend to underscore the importance of the freedom of expression and freedom of the press unshackled by propaganda.

And, last but not least – and I believe this to be essential – we should promote dialogue between our societies.

After all, when we observe current developments with regard to the migration of thousands of refugees to Europe each day, one thing is abundantly clear:

These developments appeal to our sense of humanity, but they also make us face great challenges.

We will only master these challenges if we engage in intensive dialogue on our common difficulties and if we seek solutions together.

And these solutions must take our shared values and obligations into account – for the good of all concerned.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Foreign Minister Steinmeier said the following at the award ceremony for the Emperor Otto Prize of the city of Magdeburg last Saturday:

“The present crisis has left cracks in the foundations of Europe’s security architecture. But it has also shown that the principles of construction applied in Helsinki and the fundamental elements building on this such as the Charter of Paris and the Copenhagen Document on the Human Dimension were and remain the right ones.”

We should not continue to undermine these fundamental elements, but strengthen them as the girders that underpin our common security.

Germany intends to do its part in this endeavour with its chairmanship of the OSCE in 2016.

*Thank you very much for listening.*