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Check against delivery!

At the outset, the ODIHR wishes to thank the Slovenian Chairmanship, and in particular Ambassador Lenarcic and his dedicated team for the strong support they have provided to the Institution throughout 2005. The ODIHR looks forward to working with all of the Delegations, in particular with Ambassador de Crombrughe and his Chairmanship team on the activities the ODIHR will be undertaking this year.

As in the past, the ODIHR continues to implement its mandate, as the main institution of the OSCE in the human dimension, to assist participating States to implement their human dimension commitments.

As the whole Organization strives to strengthen its effectiveness, the ODIHR too has over the past three years continuously worked on strengthening its effectiveness. The ODIHR has enhanced its co-operation with other partners within the Organization and beyond. We have also continued to strengthen programme management and donor relations capacity in order to ensure that both the regular budget as well as voluntary contributions are properly spent and reported on.

We are grateful for the overwhelming support the ODIHR received in Ministers' interventions at the 2005 Ministerial Council in Ljubljana and for the Council's confidence in our activities. Your continuing support is an important inspiration for our staff. 11 of the MC decisions contain concrete new taskings for the ODIHR. We have already started implementing these decisions.

I am particularly looking forward to submitting to the 2006 Ministerial Council a report on the implementation of existing commitments, on possible supplementary commitments, on ways of strengthening and furthering our election-related activities, as well as on improving the effectiveness of our assistance to participating States. In this, I will rely strongly on the continuous support from and cooperation with participating States, and in particular of Delegations here in Vienna. In this process, I and my colleagues from the ODIHR will conduct periodic consultations on our work for this important report.

In 2006, the ODIHR's overall priority across its thematic programmes – elections, democratization, human rights, tolerance and non-discrimination and Roma and Sinti issues – will continue to be the provision of essential support to the participating States in implementing and monitoring their Human Dimension commitments. In addition, in order to remain effective, the ODIHR will continue to develop its ability to react in a flexible and quick manner to emerging needs.

Looking briefly back at 2005, the ODIHR was called upon to observe and assess a large number of important **elections** and referenda. On these missions, in total, the ODIHR deployed 3412 election observers across the entire OSCE region.

The ODIHR thanks participating States for the secondment of observers to these elections, often during holidays and despite difficult budgetary situations. The diversity

of States participating in our Election Observation Missions has been steadily growing. Most recently, for example, observers from 43 countries participated in our EOM in Kazakhstan.

In this context, the ODIHR gratefully acknowledges the sizeable contingents of observers seconded for the first time by the Russian Federation to ODIHR observation missions during the elections in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan last year. We look forward to the continued support from participating States and take this opportunity to remind Delegations of our request for short-term and in particular of long-term observers to the upcoming elections in Ukraine. Other such requests will follow shortly.

Also in 2006, the ODIHR stands ready to deploy Missions to observe and to assess elections throughout the OSCE region. In expectation of a busy electoral calendar, we have budgeted for 10 full fledged Election Observation Missions and up to five Assessment Missions. Over the year, we also have to be prepared to respond to unforeseen electoral events, resources permitting. Based on the information available to us, we have circulated a draft elections calendar, which can also be found on the ODIHR website, where it is regularly updated, based also on additional information we receive from many Delegations. We look forward to active consultation with participating States with regard to elections, while at the same time continuing to refine the delivery of our election observation methodology.

This year, we are already fielding an Assessment Mission to the legislative elections in Canada on 23 January; we will have a report published in due time after the appeals and complaints procedures are completed. We have just deployed an Election Observation Mission to the Parliamentary Election in Ukraine on 26 March. A Needs Assessment Mission report has been circulated. The timely invitation from Belarus to observe their upcoming presidential elections is appreciated; we are currently conducting a needs assessment.

I take this opportunity to remind Delegations of a Note Verbale sent to Delegations requesting information on access for international and domestic observers to electoral processes. So far, we have received only eight replies.

The ODIHR was among the very first international Institutions to engage in systematic election observation. It has over the past decade developed a world renowned methodology in this field. We are grateful for the words of acknowledgement our work in this field received recently openly from so many Ministers in Ljubljana. We also appreciate the fact that most of our work is reflected in the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, which was adopted towards the end of last year in the United Nations framework by a considerable number of international organizations active in this field. We will continue to work together with partners on how to further enhance the work of our Missions.

Those who have followed our activities for a longer period see how much has been done to broaden both the composition of these missions as well as the scope of their activities.

An important contribution to refining our methodology will be Guidelines on Media Monitoring in Election Observation, which we are developing jointly with the Council of Europe, as well as guidelines for long-term observation. Before summer we will be organizing an expert meeting on observation of new voting technologies. The expert meeting held in Moscow last November on election observation was a useful exercise in this regard: The meeting brought together election professionals both from national election administrations and the observer community, including some 15 experts involved in domestic non-partisan election observation.

Our methodology has permitted ODIHR to report accurately on the major trends of every election it has observed. The ODIHR will present some of these trends in accordance with the new tasking given to the ODIHR in Ljubljana. After all, election observation is not an aim in itself, and work to improve election observation cannot distract from States' commitment to improve elections in our region.

In this context, the ODIHR will continue to work with authorities and civil society to further implement OSCE commitments through follow-up to ODIHR recommendations, including through legislative support. In the past year, we were invited to work with a number of participating States, including Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Ukraine, Serbia and Montenegro, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. We will continue these activities and look forward to further engaging in follow up to some of the elections observed last year, including further follow-up with Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan after the recent elections conducted in these two participating States.

As in previous years, one of the core activities of the ODIHR in 2006 will be its role in the preparation and organization of **human dimension events** throughout the year. The topics and detailed agendas are being determined in cooperation with the Chairmanship according to the modalities adopted by this Council.

The ODIHR has been able to enhance participation at the HDIM steadily over the past years, reaching new record levels every year. Civil society has reacted very positively and is showing an ever growing interest in the activities of our Organization in the Human Dimension. The high number of side events at the Meeting is another clear indicator of the growing public interest in these events, which also serve as important occasions for communication by Delegations with experts and civil society.

The ODIHR is looking forward to organizing this year's Human Dimension Events. After close consultation with the Belgian Chairmanship, we have been informed that, in line with the Chairmanship priorities, this year's Human Dimension Seminar in Warsaw will be held in May on "Upholding the rule of law and due process in criminal justice systems." We expect that human rights will be reflected upon in this regard. The Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings will cover the problems of human rights defenders, access to information, and the role of parliaments, all key factors in building democratic institutions and promoting human rights.

The special days of this year's HDIM will cover tolerance and non-discrimination, trafficking in human beings, and access to law and justice. The ODIHR hopes that this year we will again be able to attract strong participation to these important events, which represent the main point of entry for civil society into our Organization.

Since several years, the ODIHR has enlarged its **trainings** on human dimension issues for governmental and non-governmental participants by organizing trainings also for field mission staff in Warsaw. The training has received very positive feedback from the participants, both local and international staff from almost all missions. Last year again more than 100 staff members went through his training. Encouraged by the feedback, the ODIHR will continue this exercise refining some of its elements and adding modules for more specialized training where needed. This is one of the areas where we worked closely with field operations, and we are glad to thus contribute to a more effective use of the OSCE's resources.

Planning and programming of all our activities now include an enhanced element of gender mainstreaming, following the guidance provided by participating States in the **Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality**, adopted in Sofia. The ODIHR will present a report on its implementation later this year. We will also continue to assist States to implement their commitments under the Action Plan, including in their efforts to protect and promote women's rights, combating domestic violence and to develop, implement and manage self-sustainable programmes promoting the equal participation of women in democratic processes. Our activities in the field of gender and increasing women's participation in democratic processes are continuing. Following the taskings from the Ministerial Council in Ljubljana the ODIHR will also conduct workshops on UNSCR 1325 on the role of women in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. In addition, the ODIHR is mainstreaming gender issues into the human dimension events throughout the year.

The ODIHR will also continue to strengthen its capacity for the promotion of **tolerance and non-discrimination**, and will further develop its new programme for this purpose. Through this programme, the ODIHR will continue to raise awareness and develop measures to counter prejudice, anti-Semitism, intolerance and discrimination and provide expertise and to share best practices in the field.

We will continue our work in establishing the capacity to collect, compile, analyze and report on information and statistics on hate crimes. This includes developing a comprehensive information management system and disseminating the information via the internet. In spring, we plan to organize a Technical Expert-Level Meeting on Data Collection with National Contact Points on Hate Crime involving all nominated contact points. The ODIHR encourages those 17 Delegations who have still not nominated contact points to do so rapidly.

We will also continue to provide support and assistance in areas such as legislative support, training of government officials, strengthening data collection mechanisms, awareness-raising and educational activities to promote tolerance and non-discrimination.

Concerning education to promote mutual respect and understanding, in order to identify best practices and identify areas where support is needed, we will undertake an assessment of educational initiatives and programmes in the OSCE region. Our Law Enforcement Officer Programme on Combating Hate Crime has been extended to Croatia and Ukraine and this afternoon, our police experts are here in Vienna to provide all Delegations with an informal briefing on the Programme. Substantial results can be achieved by the exchange of best practices between the participating States, as well as NGOs, on how to eliminate all manifestations of hate and intolerance. The ODIHR will assist this by organizing and facilitating further NGO training workshops as well as supporting the establishment of networks of NGOs active in this area.

We have gladly accepted the Chairman-in-Office's invitation to attend the ceremonies planned in Brussels to commemorate Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January. This occasion will also be an opportunity for the ODIHR to launch the Guidelines on Remembrance of the Holocaust which we have produced in cooperation with Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

Our Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief will continue to support participating States in their efforts to promote religious freedom and enact legislation in accordance with international standards and OSCE commitments. The Panel will also continue its work in developing a training module for religious leaders and NGOs.

In this work, we will rely on our strong institutional links with other international organizations active in this field, in particular with ECRI, EUMC, UNCERD and UNHCHR. The ODIHR will also continue its close co-operation with the three Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office on Tolerance and collaborate with them in organizing joint activities and events in 2006.

The ODIHR's Contact Point on **Roma and Sinti** Issues will continue to put the implementation of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti at the core of its activities in 2006. This includes maintaining contact with authorities and NGOs and providing targeted assistance projects as well as raising awareness of these issues. While the Action Plan puts forth *strategies* for OSCE participating States, concrete *implementation* at the local level has remained at a rather low functional level.

To address these challenges, a joint conference with government representatives and inter-governmental organizations was held in October 2005 in Warsaw. We explored the implementation of policies and action plans for Roma, Sinti and Travellers, and measures against the *anti-gypsyism* phenomenon in Europe. A follow-up conference is planned for May 2006 with the aim of creating a set of guidelines and recommendations by international organizations for national implementation of Roma related policies. In addition, a regional conference on civil registration of Roma in South Eastern Europe was held in Belgrade in November 2005. The conference highlighted regional efforts to find solutions to common problems and will also be followed up with concrete steps.

The ODIHR will also continue to mainstream Roma and Sinti concerns through all its programmes. This includes analyzing the participation of Roma and Sinti in electoral

processes, encouraging their participation as observers as well as activities on voter registration, the empowerment of Roma women and combating intolerance and discrimination of Roma and Sinti. In addition, the ODIHR will again make use of other OSCE events to mainstream these concerns into the activities of the wider organization.

Our **democratization programme** aims overall to help develop capacities which are of critical importance to the consolidation of democratic culture. The Programme provides democratization and institution building expertise to participating States and OSCE field operations and offers training programmes for governmental officials and legal professionals.

In the field of democratic governance, we will continue the support for democratic governance practices. The ODIHR will also extend and develop its activities for the enhancement of multi-party systems and inter-party dialogue as well as on strengthening of analytic capacities of the parliaments. The third SHDM later this year will offer an opportunity for discussing these issues with experts.

The ODIHR will continue to facilitate the transfer of lessons learned in the Human Dimension from field operations in South Eastern Europe to those in other parts of the region. For example, the ODIHR will remain a resource on lessons learned in criminal justice reform and trial monitoring in this context and, as in previous years, plans to hold another expert level meeting on this issue in 2006 for OSCE field staff. The ODIHR will also strengthen interaction between the OSCE and relevant think tanks in order to ensure that local actors take part in discussing and transferring this knowledge.

We will also continue to provide advice and recommendations on legislation to ensure consistency with OSCE commitments.

The ODIHR work in the field of migration is expanding as demands for assistance in this area from participating States grows. In addition to the development of programmes in a number of CIS countries, we are looking forward to the regional expansion of migration related activities, also as a follow-up to the various specific events organized last year. For example, the ODIHR in co-operation with the OSCE Presence in Albania started assisting and consulting the Albanian Government regarding the project on the Modernization of the Civil Registry System.

The ODIHR, within its rule of law programme, is implementing its taskings from the Ljubljana Ministerial Council Decision on Upholding Human Rights and the Rule of Law in Criminal Justice Systems as well as the Decision on Combating Transnational Organized Crime. We are building from the Human Dimension Activities last year, notably the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on the Role of Defense Lawyers in Guaranteeing a Fair Trial. Within the context of the specific focus of the Chairmanship on issues of criminal justice and organized crime the ODIHR will also continue to highlight the challenges faced by defense bars and defense lawyers in addition to judicial and prosecutorial reform.

The ODIHR's torture prevention work will continue in 2006. In addition to work on the transfer of power to sanction arrest, the ODIHR will provide workshops on the Optional Protocol on the Prevention of Torture (OPCAT). The ODIHR is happy to continue being a resource on torture prevention activities for the OSCE field missions.

The overall goal of the **human rights programme** is to contribute to enhanced respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms across the OSCE region. The ODIHR will continue its systematic and thematic monitoring of the key OSCE human dimension commitments and will assist the Chairmanship in fulfilling its mandate in this regard.

The ODIHR underlines the importance of adhering to international obligations on human rights and the rule of law when combating terrorism. The ODIHR has highlighted that the right to a fair trial and the prohibition of torture cannot be modulated by the necessity to fight terrorists. We will continue to provide States with assistance and legal and practical advice in this regard. In line with the PC decision last year we are also in the process of compiling and analyzing national legislation on the protection of victims in order to identify best practices.

In anti-trafficking the ODIHR will continue to promote the rights of victims as part of its work in securing a rights-based approach in anti-trafficking responses. We are currently conducting a series of national referral mechanism assessments in a number of countries across the region, countries of origin and of destination, in order to evaluate anti-trafficking structures, policies and practices on the identification of trafficked persons, the protection of rights and their access to justice.

We will also carry out the ODIHR's specific mandated function as repository for states of emergency.

On human rights training and education one focus has been to enhance the professional capacity of civil society to monitor and report on the situation of human rights. We also offer training activities for public officials, including trainings in human rights well as on securing human rights in the fight against terrorism. Pilot-trainings in this area have taken place in Kyrgyzstan and in Austria and we encourage more countries to follow this year.

In the area of human rights of armed service personnel we look forward to receiving replies to the optional questionnaire we circulated at the end of last year. The date for contributions has been extended until 15 April. We are also planning a number of thematic roundtables during the year.

Cross-dimensionality and effective links between the human dimension and the politico-military and economic dimensions are important not only for the goals and objectives of the human dimension itself, but for the success and relevance of the entire Organization. Strengthening our Organization can only be achieved by our resolve to uphold the human dimension commitments which lie at the heart of the OSCE's success.

The ODIHR is the main institution in the human dimension, which in itself is central to the OSCE's comprehensive security concept. The ODIHR thus understands its activities in the human dimension as part of a wider endeavour to provide comprehensive human security across the OSCE region. As only a tiny fraction of human dimension activities in the OSCE region can be undertaken by the ODIHR itself, it seeks to focus its own efforts to where there is a value added and a comparative advantage, in close and daily cooperation and coordination with other players. They not only include partners at the national level, but also the other institutions and the field missions in our organization, as well as international organizations. Building on the concept of comprehensive security, the ODIHR approach is led by cross-dimensionality, its activities therefore linked to politico-military aspects of security as well as economic and environmental issues.

These Human Dimension commitments, which we have compiled in a new edition on the occasion of last year's Helsinki anniversary, remain the cornerstone of the OSCE as a community of values. These accumulated commitments, are the basis for the work of the ODIHR. Our resolve to assist participating States meet these commitments remains undiminished.

15 years after it was established, the ODIHR is in very good shape. We are committed to our mandate, and grateful for the support from all participating States that continue to uphold the values of our organization.