



United States Mission to the OSCE

Session 10 Human Dimension Activities

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador David Johnson
OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, October 3, 2011

Mr./Madam Moderator,

As we take stock of OSCE's human dimension work, I want to underscore strong U.S. support for ODIHR. It has earned its place as the key institution in the OSCE's efforts to promote democratic development, human rights, free and fair elections, and tolerance and non-discrimination.

At a time when our core human dimension commitments remain challenged, ODIHR's work to promote respect for human rights, provide objective assessments of the conduct of elections, and support the development of democratic institutions is even more crucial. We encourage ODIHR to focus on those core elements of its mandate, prioritize those areas where OSCE commitments are the most clearly defined, and focus on those countries where the gap between commitments and implementation is the greatest. We also believe the Director of ODIHR should be prepared to highlight key concerns and current issues that may arise in areas covered by ODIHR's mandate.

All participating States have an interest in opposing all efforts to undermine ODIHR's autonomy and impartiality, including in its election observation missions, as well as any attempts to turn back the clock on the progress we have made in democratic practices within the OSCE region. The United States has been, and will continue to be, in the forefront of States protecting ODIHR from political interference.

OSCE's well-deserved reputation for election monitoring is directly attributable to its well-known, objective criteria and procedures for election observation. We strongly support the election observation work of both the ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. We continue to believe that both of these OSCE institutions play a critical role, each providing unique and necessary expertise, and that our Organization is best served when we all speak with one voice and our institutions work together in a spirit of complementary partnership, cooperation and collaboration.

The United States continues to place great importance on the work of ODIHR, the three Personal Representatives on tolerance and non-discrimination, as well as the work of the High Commissioner on National Minorities on these and related issues. We commend the High Commissioner on National Minorities' ongoing work on multi-ethnic societies and integration

and encourage continued cooperation with the OSCE PA in this area. Although the civility of public discourse regarding national minorities had improved in many places in recent years, we are troubled that in some OSCE participating States there has been notable deterioration. This phenomenon highlights the continuing importance of the High Commissioner's engagement.

We applaud ODIHR's effort to address hate crimes in the region. In our view, a continued focus should be maintained on realistic, specific, targeted initiatives that will assist participating States in developing a clear understanding of and response to prejudice and discrimination, that will develop model legislation to meet OSCE commitments and data collection methods based on this model legislation, and will improve relations with minority and other impacted communities and a sharing of best practices. We are greatly pleased to see ODIHR's new Training against Hate Crimes for Law Enforcement operational as well as the updated Annual Hate Crimes report, both of which can assist OSCE participating States in their implementation of Athens Ministerial Decision No 9/09 on Combating Hate Crimes.

We also continue to support the three Personal Representatives of the CiO as another mechanism for addressing problems of intolerance and discrimination. Their continued focus on distinct and specific forms of intolerance provides the opportunity for a concerted response at a political level as specific problems arise. We hope the Personal Representatives will continue to address the resurgence of anti-Semitism associated with increased tensions in the Middle East and increases in anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant, and anti-Roma hate crimes and other forms of intolerance. While we support the joint travel of the Personal Representatives to countries, we also believe it is important for the Personal Representatives to be able to travel individually to maintain their ability to respond quickly to situations that may or may not impact the areas of the other Personal Representatives.

We look forward to the upcoming Supplemental Human Dimension Meeting on the prevention of racism, xenophobia and hate crimes scheduled for November 10 and 11.

The OSCE remains a singular forum for addressing human rights issues relating to Romani people, and we welcome the partnership between the OSCE and the EU to improve the integration of Roma in the Western Balkans.

We regret, however, that sustained engagement in areas like improving Romani access to education is frequently interrupted by the need to address a constant stream of human rights crises for Roma. We are not doing enough, and we are not doing it fast enough.

The participation of NGOs in OSCE events and field work in the human dimension is, we believe, one of the elements that makes the OSCE so valuable. We must ensure that that the OSCE remains open to NGO involvement, and indeed, would welcome discussions on how to strengthen it. We regret the time spent during last year's Review Conference dealing with procedural issues related to NGO participation, and commend the Lithuanian Chairmanship for ensuring that OSCE rules were properly implemented this year.

The United States continues to support the work of the OSCE field missions. At the same time, we are also interested in exploring the possibility of establishing thematic missions. We believe that on some issues, thematic missions with the ability to travel to several participating States could be very effective.

We welcome the desire and willingness of some countries to host special, ad hoc meetings on human dimension themes. This is constructive, useful, capitalizes on political momentum, and should be encouraged and supported. However, perhaps when we agree to hold these ad hoc meetings, we also should agree to reduce the number of other meetings we hold so that we can give adequate focus and consideration to each. We might do this, for example, by counting the ad hoc meeting as one of the supplementary meetings for the year. After all, Supplementary meetings can be held outside Vienna, as was the case in 2005 when one was hosted by Georgia. I would stress that we consider the HDIM a unique and irreplaceable forum that must be preserved.

Finally, I would like to stress the importance we attach to reaching out to our OSCE Partner States. As an organization, we should extend our institutional knowledge and technical expertise to our Partners for Cooperation. The universally respected OSCE objectivity, expertise and professionalism in election monitoring can and should be made available to countries outside the OSCE.