

**Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, 29 September - 10 October 2008**

Opening remarks by Ms Teija Tiilikainen, State Secretary (Political), Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Representative of the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship

29.9.2008

- It is a great pleasure to represent the Finnish Chairmanship in the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM).
- I want to stress the importance of these meetings
- first, this meeting is a key signal of the OSCE's commitment to the value of human rights
- This year we are celebrating the **60th anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights** - the corner stone of all international human rights, including commitments undertaken in the OSCE. This gives us the opportunity to reaffirm our strong commitment to the values enshrined and commitments undertaken in the Declaration. I would also wish to mention - upon our return to Helsinki - the principles in the Helsinki Final Act, in particular the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- second, the broad civil society participation makes these meetings unique; the pluralism of this setting is very important to the Finnish chairmanship
- and third, we are here to assess perhaps the most important aspect of human rights norms, namely their implementation and how to enhance their implementation
- These two weeks will cover a broad range of human rights issues, and rightly so. Now I would like to briefly touch upon some questions based on the Finnish Chairmanship priorities for the human dimension.
- PART TWO
- I want to start from the broad concept of security

- without the promotion and protection of human rights as its essential elements the broad concept of security would remain hollow
- here we do have the goals of **tolerance and non-discrimination**.
- Stereotyping, marginalization, exclusion and non-integration pose real threats to human dignity and to our societies at large. They can lead to anger, resentment and frustration, in extreme cases even to hate and violence, shattering societies along ethnic, religious or any other dividing lines. We must step up our efforts to ensure that intolerance and any form of discrimination in the OSCE region are rejected. No one should be subject to criminal offences, harassment or humiliation based on his/her real or perceived characteristics.
- In combating intolerance and discrimination we must ask ourselves again and again that **why do these phenomena continue to persist and how could we tackle them in a most efficient way?**
- Why do we need to read reports from year to year on, in particular Roma, Jews, Muslims, Christians and members of other religions, as well as members of different ethnic and minority groups and, including representatives of sexual minorities, being the victims of violence and harassment? How can we enhance our efforts to ensure that none of our fellow human beings are discriminated, not on any grounds? In the name of indivisibility of human rights we should also ensure that there is **no hierarchy among different forms of intolerance and discrimination**. Overall, there is certainly a need for **intensified targeted measures** and transnational co-operation to combat all forms of intolerance, including hate crimes, reported by the OSCE.
- The ODIHR meeting for the national contact points on hate crimes, which was organised for the first time in Helsinki in June this year, was an encouraging step in the right direction. The concrete co-operation among the focal points complements the valuable network of OSCE institutions and structures, including the Chairman-in-Office's three Personal Representatives on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination.
- **Human rights education** starting at a young age is a key element paving the way for a change in our human rights culture and for more tolerant societies
- Indeed, in addition to education provided by government funded sources, non-governmental organisations, including **human rights defenders** and the **media** are important actors in the providing critical information about human rights and the situation in a given country. **The work of these brave people, who often work under difficult circumstances, should be supported.** In addition to their role of strengthening an awareness of human rights, they are also at the forefront in defending fundamental freedoms we all have committed ourselves

to. Furthermore, the Representative on Freedom of the Media does a remarkable job in promoting the right of free speech.

- PART THREE, dear participants
- The rights of **Roma and Sinti** have been at the centre of the human dimension this year
- The Finnish Chairmanship is looking forward to the ODIHR's report on the implementation of the 2003 OSCE Roma Action Plan, to be launched during the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. We are very much urging participating States to study the recommendations of this Status report and **consider, but preferably also carry out intensified measures**. For example, one concrete issue requiring our serious investment is the provision early education for Roma children.
- I would also like to note the encouraging co-operation between the ODIHR Contact Point on Roma and Sinti Issues, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, and the CIO Personal Representative, Ms. Crickley as well as with the Council of Europe as a part of international co-ordinated efforts in improving the rights of Roma. Whilst nothing can replace the primary responsibility of the participating states in ensuring the implementation of human rights of Roma, facilitation of active and committed participation by the Roma themselves forms the other side of the coin.
- **Human trafficking** is another challenge of our time. A multidimensional, gender- and victim-sensitive approach covering all relevant actors must be enforced to combat this international crime and human rights violation. We have the relevant commitments for this, but they need to be turned into real terms. The OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, gives valuable support in bringing countries of origin, transit and destination together and assisting in their anti-trafficking efforts, for example such as identification of victims and prosecution of perpetrators.
- Ladies and gentlemen, let me still stress two further human rights priorities of the Finnish chairmanship of the OSCE
- **first, Gender mainstreaming**
- which is not only a) a women's issue or b) an issue to be dealt with in the human dimension of the OSCE. Gender mainstreaming is inherent in all OSCE activities: both across the three dimensions and within the organisation itself. Overall, gender issues are to be mainstreamed and looked at in a comprehensive way, not only dealt separately which may often lead to their marginalisation

- Just last Thursday, the Secretary-General presented to the Permanent Council in Vienna an Annual Evaluation Report on the Implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. Especially gender mainstreaming into all OSCE dimensions and therefore into the OSCE work as well as the insufficient number of women in especially the executive structure of the OSCE was highlighted. We are particularly pleased of the initiative by the OSCE secretariat in co-operation with several of the field operations, including Albania, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Moldova and Tajikistan, to start or intensify the mainstreaming of gender in politico-military and environmental projects.
- Finally, let me note the many **elections and election-related activities** within the OSCE this year. Yesterday, the elections in Belarus were monitored by a full-fledged OSCE election observation mission executed in partnership between the ODIHR and the Parliamentary Assembly. We are awaiting with interest the preliminary findings and conclusions by the election observation mission this afternoon from Minsk. Many more elections are to follow across the OSCE region. OSCE election observation is a valuable tool in supporting the development and building public confidence in the election system of a country and through this in the development and fortification of a democratic system. With this in mind the Chairmanship is committed to continue a constructive dialogue on election-related issues.
- As a conclusion, I would like to thank Ambassador Lenarčič and the whole team at the ODIHR for the organisation of this meeting. I am looking forward to the discussions and concrete suggestions made during these two weeks to come. Let the **emphasis be on the word implementation** -that is what we are here for. We all **share the need for improvement**, as nobody is perfect in human rights. However, we **should always remain ambitious and aim at doing much better**.