

Joint Conference

by the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) with the support of the incoming Serbian OSCE Chairmanship

The OSCE and Human Rights Defenders: The Budapest Document 20 Years On

10-11 June 2014

**Hotel Schweizerhof,
Berne, Switzerland**

CHAIRMANSHIP CONCLUSIONS ("Berne Conclusions")

Recalling the 1994 Budapest Document that emphasizes the need for the protection of human rights defenders, the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 that recognizes the right of everyone to know and act upon their rights and other OSCE human dimension commitments that have consistently re-affirmed the important role of civil society in the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms;

Recalling also the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms as well as the rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in international and regional human rights instruments as re-affirmed in OSCE commitments;

Deeply disturbed by the serious human rights violations those striving for the promotion and protection of human rights frequently experience as a result of their legitimate and peaceful activities – including: threats and attacks against their lives and physical integrity; intolerance and discrimination, criminalization and stigmatization, intimidation, harassment, hatred and violence against them; unlawful killings, acts of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; arbitrary arrests and detention; denial of due process and fair trial guarantees; undue curtailment of their fundamental freedoms such as their rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association;

The Chairmanship:

1. Calls for the implementation of the commitment by OSCE participating States to protect human rights defenders and for greater efforts to bring about a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders to carry out their vital work without fear;

2. Recognizes all those who steadfastly stand up for their or others' human rights despite being targeted, and calls for greater public of legitimacy of the vital role human rights defenders perform in a democratic society, including from the highest political levels of the State in accordance with the OSCE commitments agreed by participating States;
3. Remains concerned about the particular risks certain groups of human rights defenders face, including women human rights defenders, LGBTI human rights defenders, those belonging to or defending the rights of members of national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities; those fighting against discrimination and intolerance, those working in rural or remote regions and on human rights issues that are perceived controversial in society;
4. Firmly condemns all attacks, threats, intimidation and other abuses against human rights defenders and calls on competent authorities of participating States to end impunity for all such abuses by bringing the perpetrators to justice and by providing an effective remedy for the victims;
5. Calls, in the spirit of the 1994 Budapest Document, for a renewed genuine partnership – at the local, regional, national and international levels – between authorities, civil society, and other relevant actors for the improved protection of human rights defenders and the promotion of human rights;
6. Commends ODIHR for the launch of the Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, which shall serve as a valuable instrument in enhancing the protection of human rights defenders and the implementation of OSCE human dimension commitments participating States have agreed upon;
7. Urges all participating States to demonstrate political will and leadership by taking steps to ensure effective follow-up to the Guidelines and work together with civil society, social and political leaders at the local, regional and national levels in devising practical measures for their implementation;
8. Calls on participating States to cooperate with the ODIHR in their efforts to strengthen the implementation of their human dimension commitments with respect to the protection of human rights defenders, including in relation to capacity building and training of public officials and other relevant actors, awareness raising and human rights education to promote a culture of respect for human rights and the ones who defend them;
9. Encourages ODIHR to assist participating States in implementing the Guidelines; and encourages participating States to support ODIHR's human rights defenders programme, including the development of further activities contributing to the protection of human rights defenders.
10. Urges all OSCE institutions, field operations and executive structures to apply the Guidelines within their respective mandates and on the basis of existing commitments (including sharing information from the field with the OSCE institutions and executive structures as well as the Permanent Council and CiO, engaging in dialogue with the State and civil society and designating focal points for Human Rights Defenders);
11. Calls on all international organizations – including the OSCE, the United Nations and the Council of Europe and other regional bodies – to continue their cooperation in an effort to strengthen the protection of human rights defenders and support the creation and consolidation of a safe and enabling environment that is conducive to their work.