



Check against delivery

Remarks by the Chairperson of the Permanent Council
H.E. Ambassador Vuk Žugić
at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting,
Warsaw, 2nd October 2015

Mr. Chairperson,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Another HDIM has passed and I would like to extend sincere thanks on behalf of the Chairmanship to the organizers, in particular ODIHR and director Link. ODIHR introduced a number of innovations this year which help that discussions have become more structured but better publicized as well. I would also like to thank the Polish government for their continued hospitality. The address of our two Ministers of Foreign Affairs at the opening this year's HDIM has definitely raised the profile of the HDIM. We hope that the introduction of a ministerial segment will become a regular practice of the coming Chairmanships.

Despite the technical improvements, the discussions over the past two weeks resembled to a great extent the ones we have witnessed over the past few years. As it was stated by many of this year's participants, the concerns over the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms have lost nothing of their importance and urgency.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

After ten days of work, we would like to share with you our three key takeaways from this year's HDIM.

Firstly, that the OSCE's institutions have to be strengthened.

Secondly, the efforts to maintain the space for civil society and genuine NGOs must be reinvigorated.

Finally, the OSCE Chairmanship along with participating States plays a decisive role in achieving the former two.

This year's HDIM took place during a time of one of the most serious crisis since the OSCE has been established. If the statements that spoke about the implications of the ongoing crisis in and around Ukraine were not equally frequent this year as last, they still largely carried the same message and sense of urgency.

The fact that instability and violence create a fertile ground for human rights violations is no news to anyone here, but it nonetheless bears repeating. It is clear that we need to devote our attention to the human rights situation in the context of the ongoing crisis, as well as with regard to protracted conflicts. Security crises lead to an increase in human rights crises while, in turn, the disrespect for human rights drives security crises. This is at the core of the notion of comprehensive security.

Apart from that, we face other challenges as well this year: the OSCE region is witnessing the largest refugee influx in decades and, as was mentioned in a number of sessions and statements, this is posing threats not only to the respect for human rights, but as well as serious security implications. In light of this bleak security situation and looming instability, it is paramount that all the mechanisms that were designed and adopted by the participating States to watch over the implementation

of commitments are strong and functioning.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In keeping with the Joint Work Plan of consecutive Swiss and Serbian OSCE Chairmanships and the overarching priority to strengthen the implementation of commitments, we believe that the calls of civil society organizations and many participating States to strengthen our institutions must be taken seriously.

While the primary responsibility for respecting commitments, of course, lies with the participating States, it is the ODIHR, the RFOM or the HCNM that we mandated with reminding us of our commitments and assisting us in implementing them. Solid funding and a clear mandate are required to guarantee that they maintain their room for action as independent institutions in the future. The Chairmanship therefore aims to secure that in the MC Decisions that we will table this year.

As far as the civil society is concerned, it was underlined again in this room and in many other side events that civil society organizations face growing limitations. Needless to say that HDIM or any other OSCE event should not be seen as a compensation for the shrinking space that non-governmental organizations have to operate in. However, the OSCE remains the organization that is better placed than any other to allow civil society voices to be heard. In the future, we should aim to preserve and – wherever possible – extend the role of the civil society.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This brings me to my third point: The Serbian Chairmanship is pursuing an ambitious human dimension package in view of the forthcoming

Belgrade Ministerial Council. All in all 9 Ministerial Council Decisions touching on the human dimension are now under consultation with participating States. Judging from the discussions of the past two weeks, we feel encouraged that the path we have chosen is right as it takes us to all the current hotspots of the human rights debates. As we start negotiating in the coming days, we intend to incorporate into the draft decisions as many concrete recommendations as possible.

Three draft decisions touch on the issue of Tolerance and Non-Discrimination this year, specifically on intolerance against Christians and Muslims as well as on interfaith and interreligious dialogue and partnership. We will further pursue new commitments in the areas of the fundamental freedoms, that is, one DD on the Freedom of Association and one on the Freedom of Assembly.

Following numerous events on media freedom this year, a draft decision on Media in the Digital Age and one on the Safety of Journalists will be as well tabled.

Moreover, torture prevention remains high on the agenda and there will be another attempt to pass a respective decision this year. The same is true for Draft Decision on National Human Rights Institutions, our topic of the Seminar earlier this year in Warsaw.

Finally, numerous human dimension aspects will be touched upon in the Youth Action Plan as well as the Gender Addendum.

The Chairmanship sees merit in all of these drafts and intends to pursue them with utmost expedience and in an inclusive manner. Going back to

what I previously mentioned, it is obvious that our common goal should be to strengthen the institutions in the process. That means that the Chairmanship will be guided by the will to solidify and improve but never weaken provisions in existing commitments.

Finally, since 2013 when we chaired the HDC, and later as a member of Troika and now as the OSCE Chairmanship, we have supported and pursued calls for meaningful HD reforms. We still believe that at the core of this process is the further improvement of work of the HDIM.

At the same time, we have to bear in mind that this forum, despite many different voices, should be seen first and foremost as a structural platform for dialogue.

With this, we should be able to assure the greatest possible follow up to the many important exchanges we have had in the past two weeks here. On behalf of the Serbia's OSCE Chairmanship we are looking forward to work with participating States in an engaging and constructive way on achieving these ambitious goals.

At the very end, let me once again express our gratitude to ODIHR and all those included in excellent organization of this event.

Thank you.