



Statement

**In Response to Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir Director of the OSCE Office for
Democratic Institutions and Human Rights**

**as delivered by Mr. Vahe Gevorgyan, Deputy Permanent Representative of Armenia, at
the 1178th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
March 08, 2018**

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to start by welcoming and thanking Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, ODIHR Director for her appearance to the Permanent Council and presentation of the ODIHR annual report.

We agree with the ODIHR Director that the current stage in democracy and human rights is marked by worrying trends in the OSCE region. We have been always stressing the link between growing authoritarianism, systematic violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms and irresponsible actions undermining regional security. Thus, respect of the OSCE human dimension commitments remain cornerstone of the European security. Firm resolve to strengthen compliance and dialogue is the key in upholding democratic values and fundamental freedoms in the OSCE. Any attempt to restrict dialogue particularly by revisiting long-standing practice of civil society involvement in the OSCE human dimension will send wrong messages in the light of worrying trends identified in the ODIHR 2017 Annual Report.

We recognize that systematic violations of human rights are root causes for many conflicts. As far as the ODIHR involvement in the conflict related issues is concerned, we believe that it should be done in fair and even manner without prioritizing one conflict-affected group over the others. The human rights of people residing in conflict areas cannot be neglected and both access to them and their access to the Organization should not be impeded.

The ODIHR has been an important partner for Armenia in promoting new initiatives aimed at raising democratic profile and promoting human rights. We acknowledge ODIHR's assistance in law making which has been essential in transition from semi-Presidential to the Parliamentary Republic.

The annual report indicates the some aspects of cooperation of the Armenian authorities including the line ministries with the ODIHR. I would briefly touch upon on key events, which shaped cooperation with ODIHR throughout last year.

First, we value the ODIHR's involvement in all stages of electoral cycle of the April Parliamentary elections. Armenia sought joint opinion of ODIHR and Venice Commission on the Election Law on number of occasions. The joint opinions played an important role in reaching consent on number of key issues including voter list among all political parties represented in the Parliament.

Second, we value efficient cooperation of the ODIHR election observation mission with all relevant Armenian stakeholders.

Third, the elections promoted other human rights by ensuring increased participation of women and national minorities in decision making at the level of the Parliament.

Fourth, we are thankful for accepting the invitation and presenting recommendations to the relevant stakeholders of the final report of the election observation mission, which took place last December. The ODIHR recommendations have always been taken as important points of reference in improving electoral process and we look forward to continued cooperation in this regard.

Armenia appreciates ODIHR's contribution in raising awareness on the hate crimes targeting Christians and members of other religious groups in the OSCE area and beyond. The seminar and conference co-organized by the ODIHR and Chairmanship in Yerevan November last year captured important perspectives from representatives of various Churches, faith and belief communities and civil society. We hope that findings and recommendations of that conference will be reflected in ODIHR's ongoing work aimed at protection of freedom of religion and tolerance and non- discrimination.

Armenia looks forward to further cooperation with the ODIHR in 2018, which will be marked by important anniversaries of key instruments of protection such as UN Declaration on Human Rights and UN Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crimes of Genocide.

Thank you.