
Chairmanship: Sweden**1309th PLENARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

1. Date: Thursday, 15 April 2021 (via video teleconference)

Opened: 10 a.m.
Suspended: 1.05 p.m.
Resumed: 3 p.m.
Suspended: 6.15 p.m.
Resumed: 10 a.m. (Friday, 16 April 2021)
Closed: 12.15 p.m.

2. Chairperson: Ambassador U. Funered

3. Subjects discussed – Statements – Decisions/documents adopted:

Agenda item 1: **REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE FOR
DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

Chairperson, Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR.GAL/24/21 OSCE+), Portugal-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Andorra, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and San Marino, in alignment) (PC.DEL/540/21/Rev.1), Russian Federation (Annex 1), United Kingdom, Turkey (Annex 2), United States of America (PC.DEL/480/21), Holy See (Annex 3), Azerbaijan (PC.DEL/482/21 OSCE+) (PC.DEL/491/21 OSCE+), Ukraine (PC.DEL/490/21), Switzerland (PC.DEL/493/21 OSCE+), Armenia (PC.DEL/489/21), Turkmenistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Annex 4), Uzbekistan, Norway (PC.DEL/484/21), Kazakhstan (PC.DEL/529/21 OSCE+), Belarus (PC.DEL/483/21 OSCE+), Canada, Georgia (PC.DEL/548/21 OSCE+), Mongolia, Poland (PC.DEL/508/21 OSCE+), North Macedonia

Agenda item 2: ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GEORGIA, H.E. MR. LASHA DARSALIA

Chairperson, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia (PC.DEL/549/21 OSCE+), Portugal-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the European Free Trade Association country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Georgia, Moldova, San Marino and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/544/21/Rev.1), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/497/21 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/488/21), Turkey (PC.DEL/531/21 OSCE+), Azerbaijan (PC.DEL/492/21 OSCE+), United Kingdom, Ukraine (PC.DEL/547/21), Armenia (PC.DEL/507/21), Switzerland (PC.DEL/494/21 OSCE+), Norway (also on behalf of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Sweden and Ukraine) (PC.DEL/499/21), Czech Republic (also on behalf of Bulgaria, Canada, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States of America) (PC.DEL/551/21/Corr.1 OSCE+)

Agenda item 3: REVIEW OF CURRENT ISSUES

Chairperson, Secretary General (SEC.GAL/50/21 OSCE+)

- (a) *Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea*: Ukraine (PC.DEL/486/21), Portugal-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/546/21/Rev.1), United Kingdom, Turkey (PC.DEL/533/21 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/495/21), Canada (PC.DEL/498/21 OSCE+), Switzerland (PC.DEL/496/21 OSCE+), Norway (PC.DEL/500/21), Japan (Partner for Co-operation)
- (b) *Deteriorating situation in Ukraine and continued non-implementation by the Ukrainian authorities of the Minsk agreements*: Russian Federation (PC.DEL/504/21), France (also on behalf of Germany) (PC.DEL/501/21), Portugal-European Union, Ukraine, United States of America (PC.DEL/502/21), Switzerland (PC.DEL/527/21 OSCE+), Lithuania
- (c) *The aggression of Azerbaijan against Artsakh and Armenia with the direct involvement of Turkey and foreign terrorist fighters*: Armenia (Annex 5) (PC.DEL/511/21/Add.1)
- (d) *Violations of freedom of assembly in some Western European States and in the United States of America*: Russian Federation (PC.DEL/505/21), United States of America (PC.DEL/503/21), Portugal-European Union, Germany (Annex 6), Netherlands (Annex 7), Belgium (Annex 8), Austria (Annex 9), United Kingdom, France (Annex 10), Switzerland (Annex 11)
- (e) *International Roma Day, observed on 8 April 2021*: Portugal-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and

Serbia; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Andorra, Georgia, Moldova, San Marino and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/541/21/Rev.1), United States of America (PC.DEL/512/21), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/526/21), United Kingdom, Turkey (PC.DEL/539/21 OSCE+)

- (f) *Recent developments in Belarus*: Portugal-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Canada and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/543/21), United Kingdom, United States of America (PC.DEL/513/21), Belarus (PC.DEL/516/21 OSCE+)
- (g) *Abolition of the death penalty in the state of Virginia, United States of America*: Portugal-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Andorra, Georgia, Moldova, San Marino, Ukraine and the United Kingdom, in alignment) (PC.DEL/545/21/Rev.1), Switzerland (also on behalf of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) (PC.DEL/519/21 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/514/21)
- (h) *Statement by the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group issued on 13 April 2021*: France (also on behalf of the Russian Federation and the United States of America), United States of America (PC.DEL/515/21), Portugal-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Andorra and San Marino, in alignment) (PC.DEL/542/21), Canada, Switzerland (PC.DEL/524/21 OSCE+), Norway (PC.DEL/521/21), United Kingdom, Armenia, Turkey (Annex 12)
- (i) *Illegal restriction on the freedom of navigation imposed by the Russian Federation in the Black Sea*: Ukraine (PC.DEL/535/21), Canada, United States of America (PC.DEL/517/21), Norway (PC.DEL/518/21), Portugal-European Union, United Kingdom, Georgia (PC.DEL/550/21 OSCE+), Russian Federation

Agenda item 4: REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
 CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE

- (a) *Briefing on the priority of the Swedish OSCE Chairpersonship for April 2021*: Chairperson
- (b) *Visit by the Chairperson-in-Office to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan from 12 to 15 April 2021*: Chairperson

- (c) *Telephone conversations held by the Chairperson-in-Office with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, H.E. Mr. S. Lavrov, on 14 April 2021 and with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, H.E. Mr. D. Kuleba, on 3 April 2021: Chairperson*

Agenda item 5: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

- (a) *Update on the COVID-19 situation across the OSCE executive structures: Secretary General (SEC.GAL/50/21 OSCE+)*
- (b) *Launch of the Perspectives 20–30 Online Academy (an initiative organized by the Office of the OSCE Secretary General in partnership with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the OSCE Academy in Bishkek and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation’s Regional Office for Cooperation and Peace in Europe), held on 26 March 2021: Secretary General (SEC.GAL/50/21 OSCE+)*
- (c) *Address by the Secretary General, on 30 March 2021, to the Ninth Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, held in Dushanbe on 29 and 30 March 2021: Secretary General (SEC.GAL/50/21 OSCE+)*
- (d) *New format for the report of the Secretary General to the Permanent Council: Secretary General (SEC.GAL/50/21 OSCE+), Russian Federation, Albania, Georgia, Switzerland, France*

Agenda item 6: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (a) *Sixtieth anniversary of the first human space flight, observed on 12 April 2021: Russian Federation (also on behalf of Kyrgyzstan) (PC.DEL/525/21), Belarus (PC.DEL/522/21 OSCE+), Azerbaijan (PC.DEL/523/21 OSCE+), Kazakhstan (PC.DEL/530/21 OSCE+), Turkmenistan*
- (b) *Presentation of the 2021 OSCE Democracy Defender Award and associated seminar, to be held via video teleconference on 28 April 2021: Switzerland (also on behalf of Canada, Denmark, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States of America) (PC.DEL/536/21 OSCE+)*
- (c) *International conference on the death penalty, to be held via video teleconference on 4 May 2021: Portugal*
- (d) *Lethal attack on Giorgos Karaivaz and media freedom and the safety of journalists as a Greek priority: Greece (Annex 13)*

4. Next meeting:

Thursday, 22 April 2021, at 10 a.m., via video teleconference



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1309

15 April 2021

Annex 1

ENGLISH

Original: RUSSIAN

1309th Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1309, Agenda item 1

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

Madam Chairperson,

We welcome Mr. Matteo Mecacci to the Permanent Council. In the spirit of the Swedish Chairmanship's call to go back to basics, we should like to begin with the origins of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) – its election activities. It was established as an election observation office.

We note that, despite the coronavirus pandemic, the Office has succeeded in continuing its election observation activities in the OSCE area. Nevertheless, we are once again compelled to note that there are still serious imbalances in the geographical deployment and size of missions in this field. We shall cite only a few figures.

By our count, from 2018 until the pandemic began in 2020, all 17 full-scale observation missions were sent either to States of the former Soviet Union or to the Balkans and Turkey. What is more, at no time during the same period did the Office send a large-scale mission to a Western country. Even the United States of America and Poland, for which ODIHR experts had chosen the format of limited observation missions, were no exception. In addition, among the Western States, the Office decided that monitoring should not take place at all in 11 countries during the period in question. A total of 4 countries received only scaled-down expert teams, while limited election assessment missions were sent to another 13 countries. The same trend was also observed during the pandemic in 2020, when almost all full-scale observation missions were replaced by limited observation missions and by a new “coronavirus” format – special assessment missions. Again, it was in the States “to the east” – eight of them. Only to the United States and Poland was a limited observation mission and a special assessment mission deployed, respectively. In the remainder of the Western countries, there were expert teams (Lithuania), or no observers deployed at all (Iceland). At the same time, there is a persistent feeling that, against the backdrop of serious problems in the electoral sphere in the West – and 2020 highlighted this especially in a number of countries – the Office's experts seem to prefer not to notice these very shortcomings in order to artificially underestimate the format of the missions sent there. Although in the States “to the east”, similar or even lesser problems are emphasized far more acutely.

The most telling example is perhaps the inept observation by the ODIHR mission of the general elections in the United States last November. Let me remind you that the Office's observers, with considerable reservations, recognized the elections to be in accordance with democratic norms, competitive and well organized. And this despite the fact that around 72 per cent of Republican Party supporters doubt the integrity of the election. Furthermore, how can this expression of the people's will be recognized as conforming to democratic norms when observers are not allowed in 18 states in violation of paragraph 8 of the 1990 CSCE Copenhagen Document? The assertion that it is the prerogative of the state authorities to address this issue is no more than an excuse – it is the US Federal Government, not the states, that has adopted the OSCE commitments and assumed responsibility for their implementation without any exceptions.

In our opinion, the emerging picture is largely due to imperfections in the Office's existing electoral methodology, not to mention arbitrary approaches to following even this internal "methodology". As before, we call for work to begin on the development of consensus-based principles for election observation.

We are well aware, Mr. Mecacci, that the difficult situation that you have inherited cannot be changed quickly. Nevertheless, we suggest that you take a fresh look at the "electoral stereotypes" that have developed in the executive structure headed by you and try to proceed with reform in this area. I recall that, back in 2007, a joint draft ministerial decision on "Basic principles for the organization of OSCE/ODIHR observation of national elections" (on behalf of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) was put forward to the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Madrid. It would make sense to revisit this proposal. Make the office for democratic institutions truly democratic!

We are confident that it would also help optimize the Office's spending on its election activities, much of which is hard to rationalize. We therefore consider the ODIHR's request for an increase in the funding allocated to the Elections Programme within the framework of the OSCE Unified Budget Proposal for 2021 to be unjustified. When calculating the level of funding for election monitoring, the average expenditures over the previous five years are used. In other words, all the calculations are focused on the past and do not reflect the real need for resources for the future. The Office itself does not reliably know how much money it really needs for each subsequent year, which makes it fundamentally impossible to justify any increase in costs. In terms of budgetary discipline, this is a very weak methodology that does not comply with international best practices, including the budgeting norms of the organizations of the United Nations system.

The financial methodology used by the ODIHR provides no incentive to seek savings because it is based on the following principle: The more money you have spent in the past, the more money you will receive in the future. This is the approach we regularly encounter in the context of budget discussions. Moreover, the Office is unable to demonstrate any measures to increase cost-effectiveness. For example, in the 2021 Unified Budget Proposal, the Secretariat reported on savings across a number of expenditure items, while the Office limited itself to general information, without giving any insight into what it had achieved. And where are the exact figures confirming that the ODIHR is doing at least something in this area?

We should like to recall that, in accordance with OSCE Financial Regulation 6.02, all the Organization's executive structures are obliged to ensure that maximum economy is exercised in using budgetary resources. This task is especially urgent given the economic difficulties many participating States are currently experiencing in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. However, the ODIHR's requests to increase funding, as well as the lack of information on the savings it has actually achieved, raise questions: Does the ODIHR follow through on this mandate? Or does it feel that it does not have to comply with requirements shared by the entire Organization?

Mr. Director,

The pandemic has undoubtedly been an unprecedented challenge, the consequences of which we have yet to assess. It has affected all participating States and has exacerbated existing "chronic diseases". At the same time, social and economic rights have come to the fore, and the need for their protection has increased manifold. We urge you to include these rights among the priorities for the Office's work.

We share your view that there are no "perfect democracies". This means that no OSCE participating State can claim to be superior when it comes to human rights – everywhere has its faults. In spite of this, the geographical imbalance in the Office's activities persists. The situation in some countries is literally monitored with a magnifying glass, while in other countries massive human rights violations are often simply ignored or do not receive sufficient attention from the Office. One must conclude that this executive structure is being used by a particular group of countries as a tool to secure their own narrow interests. It would be interesting to hear the methodology by which the ODIHR selects countries for its critical comments. In addition, we should like to call on those very countries that are so concerned about "human rights problems" outside their territories to soberly assess the situation at home – against the background of racism, suppression of freedom of speech and assembly, persecution of dissidents, and so on. Set an example by inviting ODIHR experts to help you solve these problems. If not, then refrain from imposing such recommendations on others.

As early as 2006, at the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Brussels, participating States expressed concern "at violent manifestations of extremism associated with racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism". Since then, the situation has continued to deteriorate, especially against the backdrop of the pandemic. This once again emphasizes the inadequacy of considering the threat of neo-Nazism only in the context of hate crimes. We expect the new leadership of the Office to take practical steps to include this topic as a standing item on the agenda.

In the context of the ODIHR's annual reviews on hate crimes, we emphasize the need to be strictly guided by consensus-based definitions and themes. Constructive co-operation with the Office is in no way facilitated by broad interpretations of its commitments or by value judgements about the "reliability" of the information provided by participating States.

We note the Office's traditional focus on anti-Semitism and on Holocaust remembrance. We expect that similar attention will also be paid to combating intolerance against Christians and Muslims. The instructions of the 2014 OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Basel to elaborate declarations on combating discrimination against Christians, Muslims and members of other religions have yet to be carried out. Furthermore, we call on

the ODIHR to finally begin drafting a comprehensive document on Christianophobia – similar to the corresponding manuals on anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim crimes.

We regret to note that the Office continues to engage in questionable extrabudgetary projects and to get carried away with contradictory concepts as well as non-consensus and highly confrontational topics. Meanwhile, important issues such as the elimination of statelessness, the preservation of historical and cultural heritage, the rights of the child, the development of human contacts, and many other things fall by the wayside. The Office and the High Commissioner on National Minorities need to respond promptly to violations of linguistic and educational rights.

The Chairmanship and the participating States, with the expert assistance of the ODIHR, need to continue their work to agree on a complete “package” of human dimension events for the year. This should be carried out in strict conformity with the Organization’s Rules of Procedure and the relevant decisions of the Ministerial Council and the Permanent Council.

In general, as we have repeatedly stressed, the task of optimizing the whole human dimension of the OSCE is long overdue. Together with other like-minded countries, Russia has submitted relevant proposals on a number of occasions.

In conclusion, we wish you, Mr. Mecacci, and the staff of the Office success in your work in accordance with your mandate. We look forward to your visit to Moscow in May.

Thank you for your attention. I request that this statement be attached to the journal of today’s Permanent Council meeting.



1309th Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1309, Agenda item 1

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF TURKEY**

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

I join the previous speakers in warmly welcoming the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Mr. Matteo Mecacci, to the Permanent Council. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank his predecessor, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, whom I did not have the privilege of meeting or working with, for her dedication and work. We thank you, Mr. Mecacci, for your comprehensive report on the ODIHR's activities in 2020 and valuable assessments. In your foreword to the report, you describe the ODIHR as a "bridge builder". I think that this sums up neatly how you perceive your role as the head of the Office. We are looking forward to working with you.

The ODIHR belongs to all of us. The participating States created the ODIHR to assist them in implementing their human dimension commitments. The ODIHR should not be regarded by some participating States as their exclusive tool for their national political agendas. The ODIHR, in turn, should display the utmost diligence in preserving equidistance to all the participating States. On the other hand, it is the participating States' responsibility to secure the functioning of the ODIHR by endowing it with the necessary financial resources.

The annual reports of the ODIHR are truly impressive documents. They constitute a visual testimonial of its important activities, reflecting the hard work of its entire team – which last year was performed in challenging circumstances.

The annual report for 2020 demonstrates how the OSCE in general and the ODIHR in particular adapted and responded to the unprecedented crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The report identifies clearly the manifold challenges faced by all the participating States and summarizes the ODIHR's efforts to provide guidance and assistance through its rich toolbox. We agree that the ODIHR's work on challenges to democracy in this difficult year will serve as guidance in future emergencies.

Inspired also by this recently issued report, I would like to single out a few areas, albeit with the caveat that other aspects not covered by me are equally important.

First, election observation is one of the most visible areas of the ODIHR's work. The ODIHR has a unique toolkit and a reputation. Thus, it is all the more important that an objective and impartial methodology is applied. Ensuring equidistance and consistency is key. We commend that the ODIHR was the first organization worldwide to resume election observation despite the pandemic. At the same time, we welcome the ODIHR's pragmatic planning – adjusting to the situations on the ground and taking the necessary precautions.

Secondly, the involvement of young people is important. The youth have a high stake in the peace and prosperity of societies. As the report rightly notes, “Young people are one force behind the effective and inclusive functioning of democratic institutions.” We are facing the largest generation of youth in history. The youth are under-represented in the processes that make or break peaceful and prosperous societies. We therefore need to better include and learn from the fresh perspectives of younger generations. That is also what we mean when we say that our Organization ought to be connected to the realities on the ground. In this respect, we are pleased to hear that the ODIHR is planning to further strengthen its work on youth.

Thirdly, the focus on migration and trafficking in human beings is pertinent. The nexus between border management and human rights does indeed warrant special attention. Surely, we need to consider the consequences of using new technologies in this area. However, over the past few years, we have increasingly seen how even “traditional” border management measures effectively undermine international humanitarian law in the OSCE area. Responses to irregular migration can never justify the use of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Fourthly, we commend the ODIHR's efforts in the fight against intolerance and discrimination. We welcome the Turkish translation of the guidebook “Addressing Anti-Semitism through Education: Guidelines for Policymakers” and the publication of the ODIHR practical guide “Understanding Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes: Addressing the Security Needs of Muslim Communities”. We value the ODIHR's co-operation with and support for the three Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office. The latest ODIHR annual report points out that “Muslim women are targeted both for their gender and religion, making them especially vulnerable to hate-motivated attacks.” Regrettably, the pandemic has served as yet another pretext for unleashing hatred against vulnerable groups. We agree with the assessment in the report that a special responsibility rests with “political leaders and those creating and shaping political discourse”. It is correct that “[p]olitical narratives, including those on migration, are generated, replicated and reshaped by many people, not only politicians.” We therefore note positively the ODIHR's efforts in addressing these important issues. We see merit in sustaining and expanding the ODIHR's projects on promoting a fair portrayal of marginalized people by the media and on enhancing the capacity of schools and teachers to raise young people's awareness. We hope that at this year's Ministerial Council meeting, the participating States will finally demonstrate the necessary sense of ownership and responsibility by adopting a declaration addressing intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, Christians and members of other religions, in line with the Basel tasking.

Fifthly, human dimension events are an important and unique feature of our Organization. That is why Turkey has been among the most active participants since the very first meetings. However, these meetings have to remain as platforms for the exchange of opinions and dialogue with the civil society. Not with entities that fall under paragraph 16

and that should therefore not be there in the first place. The ODIHR has important responsibilities in that respect.

My final point relates to the COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis has demonstrated that access to health services by all people without any restriction can be considered a human right as well. The transformation of the Turkish healthcare system in recent years was undertaken also with that in mind. Turkey provides health services for all its citizens as well as to 4 million asylum seekers and refugees in the country without any discrimination. Turkey did not declare a state of emergency to combat the COVID-19 outbreak, but opted instead to pursue its efforts by adopting necessary measures in line with its legal framework.

In closing, I should once again like to thank you, Mr. Mecacci, and your team. We wish you every success in your ongoing and future activities.

I request, Madam Chairperson, that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you.

1309th Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1309, Agenda item 1

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE HOLY SEE**

Madam Chairperson,

The Holy See joins the other delegations in warmly welcoming Mr. Matteo Mecacci, Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), to the Permanent Council and wishes to thank him for his presentation.

Unfortunately, we did not have the opportunity to study the Director's report in advance of this meeting; therefore, we reserve the right to come back to it at a later stage.

Mr. Director,

My delegation wishes to express its gratitude to you and to the ODIHR staff for your efforts in assisting and supporting the participating States to implement their human dimension commitments, and in particular for ensuring the continuity of the ODIHR's activities during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. We also wish to reaffirm our commitment to a continued dialogue and to productive engagement on issues of common interest.

The universality of human rights

The Holy See reiterates that “the universality of human rights represents a crucial question for our age, a real topic *stantis aut cadentis* [i.e., a make-or-break issue], the answer to which will determine whether human rights continue to mark the common horizon for the construction of our societies, the necessary point of reference for the exercise of political power and a guide for the path to be followed by the international community.”¹ Two developments, in particular, are of concern in this regard, since they challenge, both in theory and in practice, this “foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”².

First, as Pope Francis has noted, “the interpretation of some rights has progressively changed, with the inclusion of a number of ‘new rights’ that not infrequently conflict with

1 Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Intervention at the Council of Europe on the occasion of the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 September 2018.
2 Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

one another.”³ A wide array of interpretations of certain rights and the affirmation of “new rights” create more obstacles to upholding fundamental human rights rather than facilitate it. Furthermore, it leads to a devaluation of the idea of human rights and nourishes the fallacy that such rights can be established through any kind of mere positive legislation and, if necessary, also be changed or even revoked. It is crucial that participating States remember the unifying concept of “human rights”, thereby avoiding that the human dimension continues to fall further behind.

Second, the universality of human rights is based on “the inherent dignity and [...] the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family”⁴. This universality is at risk when some human rights are ignored, when they are relativized by a constructed hierarchy among them, or when they are systematically and flagrantly ignored.

Universal human rights “are premised on the nature objectively shared by the human race. They were proclaimed in order to remove the barriers that divide the human family and to favour [...] the development of each man and of the whole man... and humanity as a whole.”⁵

Freedom of religion or belief

My delegation particularly appreciates the ODIHR’s programmes and activities pertaining to freedom of religion or belief and sets great store by them. In fact, since the very inception of the OSCE, the Holy See has considered, and continues to consider – that it is its distinctive duty to insist on this freedom, not out of a purely “personal” interest or a lack of interest in other freedoms, but because freedom of religion or belief is the litmus test of respect for all other human rights and fundamental freedoms, being itself their synthesis and keystone.

In that regard, we welcome the Guidelines on the Legal Personality of Religious or Belief Communities and encourage the ODIHR to develop capacity-building initiatives on this topic, paying special attention and respect the autonomy of such communities. It is clear that the OSCE commitments enshrine not only the inviolability of the individual conscience, but also the religious dimension in its specificity as a socially organized phenomenon, and that they therefore enshrine the right of religious communities to exist as autonomous organizations.

Moreover, my delegation appreciated the attention accorded to freedom of religion or belief in the ODIHR’s report on OSCE human dimension commitments and State responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, which rightly points out that “blanket bans on meetings in places of worship were considered excessive as they did not allow for exceptions or as disproportionate to the objective of preserving public health.”⁶

3 Pope Francis, Address to the members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, 8 January 2018.

4 Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

5 Pope Francis, Address to the members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, 8 January 2018.

6 OSCE/ODIHR, “OSCE Human Dimension Commitments and State Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic” (2020), p. 118.

Tolerance and non-discrimination

The Holy See is most supportive of the ODIHR's efforts in addressing racism and xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, Christians and members of other religions. There is a widespread agreement that such despicable phenomena can trigger violence and conflicts on different scales, thereby threatening the security and stability of the OSCE area and ultimately endangering peaceful relations among the participating States.

It is important to recall in this respect Ministerial Council Decision No. 13/06, which encourages the ODIHR to undertake activities in the field of tolerance and non-discrimination "based on existing commitments". Paying undue attention to other forms of intolerance and discrimination, as was the case in the aforementioned ODIHR report on OSCE human dimension commitments and State responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, whilst legitimate in the eyes of some, risks to distract the efforts of the OSCE and the ODIHR and precluding the adoption of effective and timely measures to implement the existing commitments, on which that report is supposedly based.

We also appreciate the ODIHR's hate crime reporting, which year after year provides the participating States with an alarmingly large amount of data on hate crimes and incidents, many of them motivated by religious bias. In that regard, it is important to highlight that "anti-Christian crimes are no longer a marginal phenomenon"⁷ and that they also occur in places where Christians are in the majority. It is important to stress once again that hate crimes and other forms of intolerance and discrimination can affect "both minority and majority communities"⁸ and that the term "minorities" is all too often used as a synonym of "victims," as if the victims of such crimes could belong only to minorities. Therefore, all forms of religious intolerance and discrimination should be afforded equal attention, irrespective of whether they are directed against the majority group or a minority group: this rules out any partial or selective approaches. The OSCE can rightfully take pride in being one of the first international organizations to have raised the alarm about intolerance and discrimination against Christians. We must remain alert, for Christians continue to suffer from prejudice, intolerance, discrimination and violence – both east and west of Vienna.

My delegation remains confident that, benefiting from the expertise acquired in drawing up guidelines to address the security of Jewish and Muslim communities⁹, the ODIHR will undertake similarly efforts to address the security needs of Christian communities. This could also be done by drafting comparable guidelines for educators on how to counter intolerance and discrimination against Christians.

7 OSCE/ODIHR, "Addressing Intolerance, Discrimination and Hate Crime: Responses of Civil Society and Christian and Other Religious Communities", meeting report, April 2020, p. 6.

8 OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 9/09.

9 OSCE/ODIHR, "Understanding Anti-Semitic Hate Crimes and Addressing the Security Needs of Jewish Communities: A Practical Guide" (2017); OSCE/ODIHR, "Understanding Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes: Addressing the Security Needs of Muslim Communities – A Practical Guide" (2020).

Equality between women and men

Turning now to the equal rights of women and men, my delegation firmly believes that “male” and “female” differentiate two individuals of equal dignity. Thus, equality is not static but, rather, is enriched by the invaluable specificity of female and male, which is indispensable for the harmony of life in society.¹⁰ As Pope Francis has remarked: “The removal of [such] difference in fact creates a problem, not a solution.”¹¹ It is, therefore, by recognizing women’s specificity, richness, and moral and spiritual strength that sustainable peace and security can be consolidated. On such a basis, the Holy See strongly supports the OSCE commitments directed to a true and authentic equality between women and men, including those designed to advance equal opportunities for women and to protect them from any kind of violence.

Unfortunately, the ODIHR’s report on OSCE human dimension commitments and State responses to the COVID-19 pandemic does not faithfully reflect the existing OSCE commitments and the very concept of equal rights of women and men, as witnessed in particular by the fact that among “women’s rights” the report included “access to sexual and reproductive health care”¹².

The Holy See relies on the professionalism and impartiality of the ODIHR, as well as OSCE’s executive structures, so that all of our Organization’s activities may be carried out in a manner that is consistent with the consensually agreed decisions and documents. Unilateral or non-consensus-based interpretations must not be used to substantially amend, overrule or transform the existing OSCE commitments, for that would result in a violation of the consensus rule on which our Organization is proudly based.

In conclusion, my delegation, while renewing to Director Mecacci its appreciation for his leadership and efforts, wishes him every success in fulfilling the mandate entrusted to him by the participating States.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

10 Cf. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, No. 146.

11 Pope Francis, *General audience*, 15 April 2015.

12 Furthermore, terms such as “LGBTI” and the like do not belong to the consensual terminology used in our Organization. Similarly, there are no OSCE commitments on so-called “access to sexual and reproductive health care and services”.



1309th Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1309, Agenda item 1

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

I should like to join the previous speakers in warmly welcoming Mr. Mecacci to the Permanent Council for the first time in his capacity as Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and in thanking him for his presentation on the ODIHR's activities over the past year.

Madam Chairperson,

The year 2020 was a challenging one for democracy and human rights across the OSCE area in many ways beyond the COVID-19 crisis. A number of measures adopted by governments to combat the pandemic sometimes encroached – whether unintentionally or not is a moot point – on human rights and fundamental freedoms, even from a long-term perspective. We fully agree that such measures should be proportionate, temporary and in compliance with the rule of law, international obligations and OSCE commitments. Bosnia and Herzegovina and its constituent entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska, also introduced several such measures. However, these were never enacted with the intention of undermining human rights, but solely to protect the health of the population.

We appreciate the ODIHR's efforts to strengthen existing partnerships and forge new ones with international organizations, State institutions and civil society. We agree that the timely monitoring and assessment of unexpected human rights challenges proved to be crucial, as did effective multi-agency and multidisciplinary co-operation.

Mr. Mecacci,

In addition to its extraordinary efforts to counter the potential negative consequences of the pandemic for human rights, we commend the ODIHR for its ability to adapt its work to the new circumstances. We have noted your effective transition from in-person meetings and events to online activities. However, the multitude of challenges in the field can hardly be addressed properly without a presence on the ground, including but not limited to the standard arrangements for election observation. At the same time, we do not wish to detract from the tremendous efforts undertaken by the ODIHR in 2020 to conduct 16 election observation missions in various formats, which have demonstrated its ability to adapt to new realities while still delivering relevant observation findings. We welcome your intention to

keep such topics as alternative voting mechanisms and the influence of social networks on elections high on the ODIHR's agenda. We concur with your words today about the importance of the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, and we fully support the Swedish OSCE Chairmanship in its efforts to adopt timely decisions on consensus-based human dimension events to be held in 2021.

We welcome the continuation of the ODIHR's support for the countries of the Western Balkans region in their efforts to follow up on the recommendations from election observation missions. The assistance project directed at five OSCE participating States in the region covers a significant part of the ODIHR's electoral assistance portfolio. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is consensus on the need for political reforms and an upgrade of the political and electoral system in order to finally fast-track the country towards integration into the European Union. However, there are still diverging views on specific practical matters, especially on the mechanisms required to ensure legitimate ethnic representation in key directly elected positions. An inter-agency working group for electoral reform is currently being set up, though the circumstances surrounding the appointment of new members of the Central Election Commission have given rise to mistrust and ill feeling among political and other actors. We call on the ODIHR to keep the bigger picture in mind and to assist our country with the introduction of electoral reforms that will harmonize civic and ethnic principles, through provisions that are simple yet adequate for responding to complex challenges.

As a beneficiary country, Bosnia and Herzegovina is grateful for all the assistance provided to a number of its institutions in meeting human dimension commitments, including but not limited to commitments on freedom of religion or belief, legislative review and democratic lawmaking. We are especially grateful both to the ODIHR and the participating States that contribute to the ODIHR's Fund for Enhancing the Diversification of Election Observation Missions, which is used to organize extensive training activities and election observation exercises in the OSCE area for representatives of civil society and State institutions.

In closing, I wish Mr. Mecacci and his team every success in their future endeavours.



1309th Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1309, Agenda item 3(c)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF ARMENIA**

Madam Chairperson,

Five months after the signing of the trilateral statement on a ceasefire – which effectively ceased the military hostilities in the Second Karabakh War, waged by Azerbaijan with the direct support and involvement of Turkey and Turkish-backed foreign terrorist fighters – the situation in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone remains fragile and unstable. This is primarily due to the ever-increasing discrepancy between the words and actions of the Azerbaijani authorities. Thus, there has of late been a marked rise in the frequency of military exercises conducted by Azerbaijan: four such exercises of various scales have taken place over these past five months, including some held jointly with Turkey. When considered against the backdrop of the continuing manifestations of hatred and intolerance towards Armenians, in which the level of animosity keeps reaching ever new heights, the statements by the Azerbaijani side about peace and reconciliation can only be described as empty and hollow, to say the least.

Madam Chairperson,

The ongoing incommunicado detention of Armenian prisoners of war and civilian hostages; the systematic and relentless destruction of the Armenian cultural heritage; the fanaticism and aggressive rhetoric on display by high-ranking Azerbaijani officials and, above all, by the President of that country who are seeking to dehumanize Armenians – all these tendencies clearly testify to the continuation of the racist and hostile State policy of Azerbaijan, which the Armenians of Artsakh have experienced at first hand. This bellicose posturing, inspired by racial and ethnic hatred towards Armenia and the Armenians, recently manifested itself in the inauguration of the so-called Military Trophy Park in Baku – a kind of “hall of fame” glorifying Azerbaijan’s aggression, which on social networks has very aptly been dubbed a “Disneyland of Hate”.

The Armenian delegation deplores this display of intolerance and disrespect towards the memory of the victims of the war of aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh and its people. In particular, it condemns in the strongest terms the scenes showing wounded and dying Armenian soldiers, as well as prisoners of war, especially in view of the refusal by the Azerbaijani authorities to release these prisoners along with other captives, including civilians, as stipulated by the trilateral statement signed on 9 November 2020. Such actions

violate the rights and dignity of the families of the soldiers who were killed or wounded or went missing in action.

This macabre celebration of death is reminiscent of Nazi propaganda and demonization during the Third Reich, when racial and xenophobic hatred directed against an entire people became the norm throughout the educational system, from kindergarten to university – when even the arts were co-opted to serve that policy of hatred.

Needless to say, this extreme manifestation of hatred and intolerance in Baku is fraught with new hate crimes and must be condemned and denounced loudly by all those who uphold the values of human rights and dignity – not least by relevant international organizations and institutions, including the OSCE, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group.

This is not about politics: it is a purely civilizational choice. The choice between, on the one hand, upholding the values and civilizational ethos salvaged by the international community from the great tragedies of the twentieth century and, on the other, going down the path that leads back to the barbaric hatred and violence of the Dark Ages.

Madam Chairperson,

It is not surprising that against this background we are seeing an increase in incidents and provocations involving members of the Azerbaijani armed forces in Nagorno-Karabakh, including the throwing of stones at passing vehicles with Armenian number plates. Recently, a minivan carrying the remains of fallen Armenian soldiers became the target of such an attack. In addition, on 10 April, the Azerbaijani armed forces fired machine guns at two farmers in the village of Sarushen who were working in their fields.

As a result of the war and the occupation of the territory of Artsakh by Azerbaijan, we have witnessed a fresh wave of cultural genocide and vandalism by the Azerbaijani authorities. Within the last ten days or so, various monuments to the heroes of the Great Patriotic War, a monument to the victims of the Armenian Genocide and several Armenian churches have been demolished, desecrated and destroyed.

The long list of Azerbaijan's violations of international humanitarian law and of the trilateral ceasefire statement signed on 9 November 2020 recently grew even longer. For in addition to the war crimes and violations related to the unlawful incommunicado detention of Armenian prisoners of war and civilian hostages, and the inhuman and degrading treatment of these detainees, Azerbaijan is currently engaged in the demolition of houses and other property in the occupied territories of Artsakh. It is beyond any doubt that through such carefully planned criminal actions, Azerbaijan is seeking to rule out any possibility of the safe and dignified return of Armenian internally displaced persons and refugees to their homes, thereby also violating the seventh provision of the aforementioned trilateral statement, which stipulates: "Internally displaced persons and refugees shall return to the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent areas under the supervision of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees."

Madam Chairperson,

The Armenian delegation would also like to draw the Permanent Council's attention to the pronouncements made by the "hereditary president" of Azerbaijan in his speech at the recent informal summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States. In that speech, which was addressed to the societies of Turkic-speaking and Muslim countries and was replete with anti-Armenian sentiments, President Aliyev deliberately introduced ethnic and religious elements into the Nagorno Karabakh-Azerbaijan conflict in an attempt to rally the Turkic and Muslim worlds in support of Azerbaijan's aspirations. By shifting the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and Armenophobia into the dimension of pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism, the President of Azerbaijan has imbued a great deal of radicalism into these ideologies.

Madam Chairperson,

The current situation in Nagorno-Karabakh is the result of a flagrant violation by Azerbaijan of several core principles of the Helsinki Final Act, namely refraining from the threat or use of force; peaceful settlement of disputes; equal rights and self-determination of peoples; and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. should be no illusion that the results of the use of force, accompanied by war crimes and violations of international humanitarian law, can ever become the basis for a lasting and sustainable peace. Such a peace can only be achieved in the region through a comprehensive settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which must include determining the status of Artsakh on the basis of the realization by the people of Artsakh of their inalienable right to self-determination, ensuring the safe and dignified return of the recently displaced population to their homes, and preserving the cultural and religious heritage of the region.

Madam Chairperson,

I kindly ask you to attach this statement to the journal of today's meeting.

Thank you.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1309

15 April 2021

Annex 6

ENGLISH

Original: GERMAN

1309th Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1309, Agenda item 3(d)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF GERMANY**

Madam Chairperson,

Since my Russian colleague mentioned Germany in his statement, I should like to exercise my right of reply.

I have already spoken on several occasions here in the Permanent Council about the right of assembly in Germany. I shall therefore refer to my earlier remarks on this subject.

With regard to the comments made by my Russian colleague concerning the German measures against the coronavirus and the right to protest against them, I should like to make the following corrections.

The right of assembly in Germany exists without prejudice to the current pandemic. The imposition of protective measures merely ensures that demonstrations are possible even under pandemic conditions.

Only when participants in a demonstration grossly violate these protective measures will coercive measures be used as a last resort. Anyone who has been subject to such measures may take legal action.

Attacks on journalists are unacceptable – regardless of the circumstances under which they occur. Police authorities in Germany are continuously examining how the media can be even better protected during their coverage of demonstrations.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1309
15 April 2021
Annex 7

Original: ENGLISH

1309th Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1309, Agenda item 3(d)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE NETHERLANDS**

Madam Chairperson,

In response to the statement by the Russian delegation, and in addition to the statement just delivered by the representative of the European Union, I should like to briefly exercise my right of reply.

As we have stated on earlier occasions, anyone in the Netherlands may demonstrate, provided that public order is maintained and public health is not endangered.

The situation that my esteemed Russian colleague is referring to was a spontaneous demonstration in Amsterdam.

The Netherlands police acted in a controlled and phased manner in response to this unannounced demonstration. The protesters were asked several times to disperse and observe the COVID-19-related rule about maintaining a distance of 1.5 metres from others. Despite repeated warnings, the protesters did not comply with these requests.

The protesters were then driven in buses to another location where they could continue their protest. During this transport operation, COVID-19 regulations were taken into account. For example, face masks were distributed.

Madam Chairperson,

I kindly ask you to attach this statement to the journal of the day.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1309

15 April 2021

Annex 8

ENGLISH

Original: FRENCH

1309th Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1309, Agenda item 3(d)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF BELGIUM**

Madam Chairperson,

Belgium aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union. Since the country I represent has been mentioned, I should also like to briefly exercise my right of reply in a national capacity.

Belgium is strongly committed to the protection of all fundamental freedoms, which are indispensable in our democratic societies, and is constantly striving to uphold and strengthen the guarantees aimed at ensuring their respect.

The police handling of the so-called “La Boum” gathering and the events on 1 April in the Bois de la Cambre in Brussels took place in accordance with the philosophy of “negotiated management of public space”. This philosophy is the police reference model for law enforcement measures in the area of public policy. A key principle in this regard is the de-escalation of violence. The use of force should be withheld as long as possible and limited to what is strictly necessary. The use of force must also be preceded by a warning.

An anonymous group had called for a gathering in the Bois de la Cambre on 1 April to hold a wild party. The organizers later argued that it was a joke on the occasion of April Fool’s Day, but a crowd of 2,000 to 3,000 people actually gathered at the place and time announced.

At no time did the authorities intend to restrict the right of expression when they decided to disperse this crowd, which failed to adhere to the measures imposed in the context of the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Given the real danger that this situation represented, the police decided to deploy reactive police forces, with adequate protective equipment, and through the same standardized communication channels requested the crowd to leave the scene under penalty of possible sanctions and arrest, in accordance with the law and the principles of expediency, subsidiarity and proportionality. As this had very little effect and given the throwing of projectiles, the physical aggression towards the police officers and the provocative acts such

as attacks on the police officers by several groups, the police, through the same channels, warned that they would intervene and disperse the crowd.

In Belgium, any violation of the legal framework and the principles to which police operations are subject is liable to prosecution, including criminal prosecution. In addition, as mentioned at a previous Permanent Council meeting, any interested party who considers themselves to be a victim of improper police action may lodge a complaint with the Standing Police Monitoring Committee. This mechanism was indeed used following the events of 1 April. At least two complaints have already been filed and will be followed up.

Madam Chairperson, I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.
Thank you.



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council

PC.JOUR/1309
15 April 2021
Annex 9

ENGLISH
Original: GERMAN

1309th Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1309, Agenda item 3(d)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF AUSTRIA**

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

Since Austria was mentioned under this agenda item, allow me to exercise my right of reply.

I should first like to fully endorse the statement by the esteemed Permanent Representative of the European Union.

Austria already commented in detail on very similar remarks in the Permanent Council on 4 February, where it pointed out the following:

Austria is unequivocally committed to the freedom of assembly guaranteed under constitutional law and international law.

The restrictions provided for by law are subject to the principles of necessity, proportionality and judicial control. These principles apply equally to police operations, which must be evaluated on an ongoing basis, especially in the case of demonstrations prohibited by the authorities.

We will recirculate the more detailed statement made at that time after this meeting.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1309

15 April 2021

Annex 10

ENGLISH

Original: FRENCH

1309th Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1309, Agenda item 3(d)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF FRANCE**

Since France was mentioned by our esteemed colleague representing the Russian Federation, I should like to exercise my right of reply.

France also aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union.

France reiterates the importance it attaches to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of expression, freedom of opinion and freedom of peaceful assembly. In this context, and particularly with regard to public order management during demonstrations, the use of coercion by the police is strictly regulated by French law and the French Government ensures that this use is controlled, proportionate and monitored, as provided for by law and in accordance with our international commitments.

With respect to the carnival mentioned by Russia, it was surrounded by a police cordon in order to ensure the safety of the participants, in accordance with the law. I should also like to point out that this carnival was prohibited – it had not even been announced – and that most of the participants completely disregarded the requirements related to the state of health emergency (failure to wear a face mask, to comply with protective measures, etc.) However, and contrary to what has just been stated, it was not these factors that led to the use of tear gas to disperse this gathering, but the fact that certain individuals committed acts of violence against the police and acts of vandalism. In addition, it should be recalled that tear gas, contrary to what has been said, does not “poison” people – unlike other substances.

Consequently, during this event, the use of force by the law enforcement authorities was in strict compliance with French law and fully adhered to the requirements of the law regarding the control of public force, in particular in terms of the necessity and proportionality of its use.

Madam Chairperson, please attach our statement to the journal of the day.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1309

15 April 2021

Annex 11

ENGLISH

Original: GERMAN

1309th Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1309, Agenda item 3(d)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF SWITZERLAND**

Madam Chairperson,

As Switzerland was mentioned in the statement by the distinguished Russian representative, I should like to exercise my right of reply.

The police operation in the city of St. Gallen referred to by the Russian delegation took place, not on 4 April, but on 2 April. Unlike the peaceful protests held earlier this year across Russia, where thousands of people were arrested, this was a violent gathering. The police operation has led to a lively public discussion. The authorities and the police are also involved in these discussions.

As previously made clear, freedom of assembly is protected in Switzerland by the Federal Constitution. In line with international obligations, freedom of assembly may only be restricted provided that there is a legal basis, the restriction is justified through a public interest or the protection of the basic rights of third parties, that it is reasonable and that the core content is preserved.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1309

16 April 2021

Annex 12

Original: ENGLISH

1309th Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1309, Agenda item 3(h)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF TURKEY**

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

Turkey is an active member of the OSCE Minsk Group. Turkey has always actively and constructively participated in the meetings of the Group and in the briefings given by the Co-Chairs and the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference.

The sequencing and methodology of the interaction between the Co-Chairs and Minsk Group members are clear. We have been emphasizing the necessity of bringing a synergy to this interaction on every occasion.

Madam Chairperson,

The two statements issued on 10 November 2020 and 11 January 2021 by the President of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of Armenia and the President of the Russian Federation were important steps.

One of the significant aspects of the 10 November statement is the monitoring of the ceasefire. At Azerbaijan's request, Turkey established a joint centre with the Russian Federation on 30 January 2021 to monitor the ceasefire. The joint centre is contributing to establishing and maintaining peace and stability in the region.

Furthermore, Turkey continues to support Azerbaijan in its efforts to clear mines and improvised explosive devices in areas liberated from occupation.

We welcome the steps for developing and improving economic and transport connections. Turkey supports President Aliyev's proposal to establish a multilateral mechanism for regional co-operation.

We believe that the way to achieve sustainable peace, stability and prosperity in the South Caucasus is through regional ownership and co-operation.

We join Azerbaijan's call on the OSCE and its participating States to support the two trilateral statements. The OSCE could provide important contributions through its rich toolbox.

Madam Chairperson,

We see that the Armenian delegation is insisting on pursuing a policy based on disinformation, distortion and deception. It is hybrid in nature. Needless to say, we reject all the allegations that were repeated yesterday, also in the hate speech slot. We regret the continuation of poisonous discourse and enmity here at the OSCE.

New approaches are needed. Now there is a real chance for peace. For that, we need the Government of Armenia to change course. It is Armenia and the Armenian people that will benefit most from the stability and economic development in the region. A positive step by Armenia will be reciprocated by Turkey.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1309

15 April 2021

Annex 13

Original: ENGLISH

1309th Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1309, Agenda item 6(d)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF GREECE**

Madam Chairperson,

On 9 April, the whole of Greece was shaken by a most heinous crime, namely the brutal murder of the journalist Giorgos Karaivaz. Reacting immediately, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis instructed the competent Greek authorities to swiftly shed light on the crime, apprehend the perpetrators and bring them to justice. This case has the utmost priority for the Hellenic Police.

Acknowledging the vital importance of promoting and protecting freedom of expression, online and offline, together with freedom of the media – both of which are fundamental prerequisites for building inclusive democracies and establishing good governance and peace – Greece continues to prioritize the safety of journalists and other media actors.

In that respect, every other year since 2013, Greece has been submitting – together with a core group of countries (Argentina, Austria, Costa Rica, France and Tunisia) – the resolution on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity to the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. Greece also participates in the core group of countries supporting the Austrian-led resolution on the safety of journalists, which is adopted every two years by the Human Rights Council.

Moreover, Greece is a member of the informal OSCE Group of Friends on the Safety of Journalists and of similar groups established by the United Nations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). When necessary, Greece also provides the Council of Europe's Platform for the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists with adequate information on the situation with regard to media freedom on its territory.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.