

## **Welcoming Statement**

**Ambassador Christian Strohal**

**OSCE ODIHR – UN OHCHR Workshop on Human Rights and  
International Cooperation in Counter-Terrorism**

**Liechtenstein 15-17 November 2006**



Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear colleagues,

I would like to welcome you all here in Liechtenstein and to thank our hosts in particular the Minister for Foreign Affairs for their generosity and for their outstanding efficiency in helping us to organise this Workshop. I also thank the UN OHCHR for jointly organising this event. This demonstrates fruitful cooperation on human rights and counter-terrorism on the international level which not only included cooperation with OHCHR but also CoE and other important partners.

The topics that will be discussed over the next two and a half days are subjects that the OSCE has been working on consistently over the past five years. In recent years, the question of how to cooperate efficiently to counter terrorism on a global level while fully ensuring the protection of human rights has been at the forefront of debate around counter-terrorism. The ODIHR has provided substantive input on human rights for Workshops and Conferences on the issue of international cooperation to combat terrorism organised by the OSCE Action against Terrorism Unit and the UNODC, among others and has produced a number of background papers on the topic. In this way, we have made sure that the ODIHR's unique mandate to work on security issues and human rights and the respect for the rule of law is used to its best advantage by complementing the work of others focussing on counter-terrorism. This Workshop builds upon those experiences by allowing for a fuller discussion of the highly complex issues relating to human rights and international cooperation in counter-terrorism.

The OSCE Region provides a unique landscape for international cooperation in combating terrorism stretching from North America to Central Asia and encompassing States who are members of the European Union and the Council of Europe as well as many who are members of NATO, the CIS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. The work of the OSCE ODIHR on human rights in international cooperation to combat terrorism needs to take into account these geographical differences while also focussing on the fulfilment of OSCE commitments in this area which bind all OSCE participating States.

The overall goal of the ODIHR Human Rights and Anti-Terrorism Programme is to strengthen compliance with international human rights standards and OSCE commitments relating to the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. The ODIHR is also mandated to assist participating States in their implementation of Security Council Resolution 1373 including the obligation on States to cooperate with each other in combating terrorism. To this end, the Programme aims - through practical measures - to strengthen the focus on human rights protection in anti-terrorism law, practice and policy. It seeks to infuse States' efforts to counter-terrorism with a practical understanding of the human rights implications of their actions.

In view of these goals and tasks, the ODIHR, in co-operation with the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, organised a *Workshop on the Protection of Human Rights while Countering Terrorism* in Copenhagen in March 2004. This was seen as the second stage in the debate on the relation between the fight against terrorism and human

rights, initiated by the September 2003 seminar in The Hague on human rights and terrorism organised by the Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC) in co-operation with the Netherlands OSCE Chairmanship. In July 2005, the ODIHR organised a Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Human Rights in the Fight Against Terrorism in Vienna which focussed on three topics – the absolute prohibition on torture, the role of civil society and freedom of religion. One of the recurring issues at that event was that of the principle of non-refoulement and other issues arising out of the increasing need for states to cooperate with each other in combating terrorism.

This Workshop builds on this previous work by focussing on the issues that arise when States seek to cooperate with each other. How can States ensure that evidence that they share with each other can actually be used to effectively prosecute terrorists in accordance with fair trial standards? What can States do when an individual claims that their bank account has been frozen as a result of mistaken identity on an international terrorist list? How can States ensure that when they transfer a person to another State, that person will not be at risk of serious violations of human rights in the receiving State? It is a topic which lends itself to this kind of inter-governmental forum and relies on States working together to ensure that human rights are adequately protected across the OSCE region. We very much hope that the forthcoming discussions will provide useful and practical input into your daily work in combating and preventing terrorism.

The programme is loosely divided between sessions on the first day dealing with the transfer of persons and the second day addressing transfer of information and questions related to the listing of terrorist organisations. In each session there will be a presentation from a national expert, an international law expert and an international human rights law expert which will be followed by ample time for discussion. It is your active participation in the discussion that will make this a rich and rewarding Workshop. I am very pleased to see so many expert participants from across the OSCE region and am sure that this opportunity for an exchange of experiences will be invaluable in establishing contacts and in assisting you to develop human rights compliant policies for effective international cooperation to combat terrorism. I particularly thank those who contributed papers.

The ODIHR sees this Workshop as a unique opportunity to discuss these issues on an expert technical level, thus ensuring that the discourse around protecting human rights in the fight against terrorism is fully reflected not only on the political but also the practical level. The fight against terrorism will be lost if we are unable to protect human rights and the rule of law in bringing terrorists to justice. The protection and promotion of human rights across the OSCE region is crucial, not only in upholding our values, but also in ensuring that our actions to combat terrorism do not foment the conditions that terrorists exploit in calling others to their cause.

I look forward to a dynamic and constructive discussion and beyond I am confident that your contributions will feed into further activities on both the practical and political levels. I would also like to encourage you to continue cooperation and networking.