



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights



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(as prepared for delivery)

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Mayor, Mr. Assistant Director General, Ambassadors, Friends.

I have truly enjoyed listening to the discussions here over the past three days, both in the Plenaries and the Round Tables, even where I might have disagreed with some of the ideas which were advanced. Certainly, Human Rights and Terrorism, Globalization and Discrimination, and the challenges of Poverty are all topics which we have to keep on the international agenda.

I come to this meeting representing a slightly different segment of the world's community of human rights activists from most of you in the hall. I am, you might say, not a philosopher or a theoretician, I am an implementer, a practitioner. I do not represent civil society, nor do I represent a single government.

It's my pleasure to speak to you today as a representative of the world's largest **regional** human security organization, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Let me elaborate for a minute on each of those terms.

Of course, we include far more than just "**Europe**," by whatever definition you use, for our 55 participating States include North America; Western, Central and Eastern Europe; the Russian Federation; the Southern Caucasus, and five Central Asian States. We also have six "Mediterranean Partner" States and four "Asian Partners for Cooperation" who participate in some of our activities.

We were created, originally, as a means to address concerns of **security**, as part of the Cold War negotiations between East and West known as the Helsinki Process. Our founding document was the Helsinki Final Act of 1975.

But we are not a hard security organization, like NATO; we are not a military alliance. Beginning in Helsinki, we have identified three "dimensions" to Human Security:

The Politico-Military Dimension,

- which deals with things like confidence-building measures, troops, bases, and borders;
- which looks out for the situation of national minorities;
- which was the genesis for establishment over the past decade of our large Field Missions in places like Bosnia, Kosovo, or Georgia;
- which addresses technical aspects of the fight against terrorism;
- and which is developing new programs to professionalize the police services .

The Economic and Environmental Dimension,

- which monitors economic and environmental developments among the participating States and alerts them to any threat of conflict; and
- which facilitates the formulation of economic and environmental policies and initiatives to promote security.

And the **Human Dimension**, which covers

- human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of the media, freedom of religion or belief, and respect for human rights in the fight against terrorism;

the rule of law, separation of powers, and democratic institutions;
democratic elections and legislative standards;
and the fight against intolerance and discrimination of all kinds.

One important characteristic of the OSCE is the fact that we result from political commitments, not legal obligations. In a way like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Helsinki Final Act is not a treaty, it's a promise; and the same holds true for all of the subsequent documents of the OSCE.

The States realized, as the CSCE process developed, that it was in their international political interest to make these promises to each other, to themselves, and to their citizens; and, importantly, they also realized it was in their interest to help each other keep the promises.

That's where the **Cooperation** in our name comes in. And that is in particular where my Office, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, comes in.

Many people, myself included, believe that the principles of the Helsinki Final Act were key elements in the generally peaceful demise of the Communist system and the end of the Soviet Union. I keep a fragment of the Berlin Wall on my desk as a reminder.

Following the stunning events of late 1989 and thereafter, the tempo of change picked up in the CSCE, with increasingly detailed agreements reached over the next five years in Copenhagen, Paris, Moscow, Prague, Helsinki and Budapest.

The documents which emerged from these meetings reaffirmed the States' commitments to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the first time they included a commitment to hold, and to allow international observation of, "free elections...at reasonable intervals by secret ballot..."

To implement this latter commitment, the participating States established the Office for Free Elections, and for obvious, politically symbolic reasons accepted an invitation to locate that Office in Warsaw, Poland.

Since our creation in 1991, the Office has developed the world's most complete, and most effective, methodology for long-term observation of elections, including election systems and legislation, the campaign period, media coverage of candidates, voter registration, polling day procedures, counting and reporting the results, and monitoring the complaints and appeals process.

Within two years of its creation, the Office was changed to its current designation, the Office for **Democratic Institutions** and **Human Rights**, known as ODIHR.

In addition to its election mandate, the ODIHR is charged with organizing annual Review Meetings to verify implementation of those Human Dimension commitments, and with other meetings and Seminars on thematic issues such as "Democratic Institutions and Democratic Governance," which we discussed for three days last week, or Human Rights and Judicial Systems, Community Policing in Minority Communities, Human Rights Education and Training, Freedom of Religion or Belief, Prison Reform, etc., etc.

Reports on all these election observations and other meetings can be found on our website at www.osce.org/odihr. We also publish a variety of other reports, documents, manuals and handbooks; all are available via the Internet. There is a short information sheet which you may find in the hall, with further information.

In recent years, the ODIHR has expanded its activities, at the request of participating States, to the preparation and implementation of assistance programs in key areas of human rights and democracy building.

Some states still chafe at our criticism, and resent it when our meetings hold up for public scrutiny their failures to comply with the commitments they have made.

But most participating States are now ready, even eager, to seek help, from ODIHR, other OSCE Institutions, and the OSCE field Missions, to improve their performance.

So, in cooperation with host countries and with assistance of experts drawn from other countries with similar experiences, we have organized activities on

- Building gender equality in the Southern Caucasus
- The Election Law in Albania
- Prison reform in Kazakhstan
- Revising the Civil Registry in Ukraine
- Raising public awareness on issues of the death penalty in Central Asia
- Building capacity of civil society to monitor trials in Azerbaijan
- Protection of the victims of human trafficking in countries of destination
- Roma and Sinti rights in South-Eastern Europe, and
- Assisting States in protecting human rights while countering terrorism.

Most recently, we have been given some very explicit tasks by the participating States in the area of Tolerance and Non-Discrimination. Following two conferences on the subjects in Vienna last year and a decision by our Ministerial Council in December, the OSCE continues its activities in the field with

- A conference on Anti-Semitism last month in Berlin, at the invitation of Foreign Minister Fischer
- A special meeting on hate speech on the Internet, to take place in Paris June 16-17 at the invitation of the French Foreign Ministry, and
- A Conference on Racism, Xenophobia and Related Discrimination, at the invitation of Belgian Foreign Minister Michel in Brussels on September 13-14, three years after the World Conference in Durban.

We have already forged initial bonds of collaboration with the UN's Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the CERD, with the EU Monitoring Center (whose Director you heard here, yesterday) and with the Council of Europe's Commission on Racism and Intolerance, ECRI.

During the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw in October, we will, together, consider the outcome of this year's meetings and make recommendations for further action.

Meanwhile, participating States are negotiating a new Action Plan on Gender Equality, which they intend to adopt at the Ministerial Council meeting in December, just as last year the Ministers adopted a new Action Plan on Roma and Sinti Issues and a lengthy Action Plan on Trafficking in Human Beings.

But of course, as for the Documents which emerged from World Conferences in Vienna or Beijing or Durban, it's not enough to have the Plan, you also have to have the ACTION. And that's where I believe the ODIHR serves as a strong example of best practice.

The work we do is certainly worth doing; otherwise, why would governments, and representatives of civil society, keep asking us for more?

My challenge to all of you – to all of us – and my call for action before the next World Forum, is to strengthen your own, regional versions of the OSCE and the ODIHR.

The promotion and protection of human rights **must** be a collaborative effort. We stand ready, eager, to share our experience with you.

I thank you for your attention.