

# 15<sup>th</sup> HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

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Warsaw



Opening remarks by

Ambassador Janez Lenarčič

Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Check against delivery!

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and great privilege for me to welcome you here today for the opening of the 15th Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. Let me start by welcoming our speakers this morning: Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, H.E. *Evaldas Ignatavičius*, representing the Chairperson-in-Office; H.E. *Grażyna Maria Bernatowicz*, Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, representing the host country; the OSCE Secretary-General, *Ambassador Lamberto Zannier*; High Commissioner for National Minorities, *Ambassador Knut Vollebaek*, the Representative on Freedom of the Media, *Ms Dunja Mijatović*, and the Chair of the Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, representing the President of the OSCE PA, *Mr Matteo Mecacci*.

Particularly, I wish to welcome this year's keynote speaker, Ms Khadija Chérif, Secretary General of the International Federation for Human Rights, from Tunisia.

*Je vous souhaite la bienvenue à Varsovie et j'ai hâte d'écouter vos vues sur la démocratie et les droits de l'homme,*

*en particulier a la lumière des développements dans le pays et la région d'où vous venez.*

I will have an opportunity to address each session, and will – together with our introducers – try to give an overview of where we stand as far as implementation is concerned on each item to be reviewed. I would however here wish to make a reference to three momentous events that in my view, since the Review Process last year, made our Organization stop for a while from doing business as usual, and take somewhat deeper look at where we stand with implementing the commitments States have adopted.

### **1) Astana Summit.**

The process of preparations for and the conduct of the Summit in Astana revealed a number of issues and gaps that still need to be tackled.

One of the words and phrases that we kept hearing and using constantly is 'political will'. If there is a political will to admit that there is a lack of implementation in some areas, why is there not sufficient political will to actually move towards overcoming those identified shortcomings?

Who else – other than the heads of state and government themselves – would be best placed to garner the necessary political will?

We welcomed the Astana Commemorative Declaration, in which the OSCE participating States again categorically and irrevocably reaffirmed, this time at the highest level, that commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned; and that participating States value the important role played by civil society and free media in helping them to ensure full respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy, including free and fair elections, and the rule of law.

Astana provided an important and powerful confirmation that the States remain fully bound by their commitments, including those in the area of the human dimension. After all, it also reiterated a comprehensive and integral approach to security. The Astana Declaration provides anew a strong impetus for more accelerated and visible progress in closing all the gaps in implementation.

2) **20<sup>th</sup> anniversaries** of independence, of the beginnings of democratic transitions, and of ODIHR anniversary.

A number of OSCE participating States in 2011 celebrate the anniversary of their independence. A number of States celebrate the time – even longer than 20 years by now – when their societies managed to set themselves free from political

oppression and to embrace the values of democracy and respect for human rights.

ODIHR celebrates its 20-year anniversary with them. Twenty years ago, this Office was set up by States with the task of assisting the democratic transition processes that were underway at the time – starting with free elections, building democratic institutions, respecting human rights and promoting tolerance. They also in years that followed all recognized that the assistance is not needed only in countries in transition, but that challenges in the area of the human dimension exist in other subregions of the OSCE area, too. Our mandate – as well as challenges in the OSCE States – kept growing in last 20 years.

I said it before, I will say it again:

There is no perfection in this world; there is no ideal society and there is no flawless democracy. There is however an idea of an ultimate goal, shared by all, and neatly put together in a comprehensive set of commitments for States to abide by.

And I come back to the political will. Political will is needed to approach this idea with greater vigour and more concretely, without looking for excuses that prevent us from doing it here and now.

3) The last, but by no means the least point – this year will stay in our memories for the developments in **Southern Mediterranean**. Societies there themselves decided – not all that different from what happened in the OSCE area some 20 years ago – that it is time for them to enjoy freedom and to have a say in their future. OSCE can not stay aside from the momentous happenings in our Partner countries. The importance of a stable and prosperous neighbourhood is enshrined in numerous OSCE documents.

The societies there face many similar challenges as our own participating States have been facing – and still face – on their way towards reaching the goals of ‘full democracy’.

For that reason, I see that there is a role for the OSCE to share its experience and good practices. Supporting our partner countries in their current endeavours is not only desired, but necessary. One always has a chance to learn from own mistakes, but why do that when there is an opportunity to avoid them by learning from others.

I am in no way arguing that OSCE’s attention should deviate to another geographic area. Things remain to be done within our participating States. There is enough will and means to do both.

The meeting's aim is to review the implementation:

- 1) by first and foremost engaging in a peer review and calling on accountability of individual States by other States – the concept first laid down in the Moscow Document of 1991 and reiterated in Astana that raising human rights concerns in the OSCE context is the legitimate prerogative of all States and should not be construed as interference in that country's internal affairs.
- 2) by the civil society sharing their concerns and providing their input and contributing towards developing government policies.
- 3) by the ODIHR and other OSCE Institutions and Field Operations, whose main role remains the one of monitoring, assistance and reporting.

In addition to the regular working sessions, almost 60 side events will take place over the next two weeks.

I welcome you all again to Warsaw and wish you an interesting HDIM.