



Address by Ambassador Janez Lenarčič,
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Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

at the
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Check against delivery!

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to present my last regular Report to the OSCE Permanent Council in the capacity of ODIHR Director. As usual I will present the most important activities of our Office during last year and provide you with our plans for 2014.

In addition I will mention some current issues at hand, especially situation in Ukraine and our (possible) activities in this participating State. Furthermore, I also wish to make a few remarks on the adoption of the decision on Human Dimension Events to be organized by our Office in co-operation with the Chairmanship.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start with **election** observation or assessment activities of ODIHR. In 2013, we continued to fulfil our mandate in line with a well-developed and globally recognized election observation methodology, which is based on a long-term and needs-based approach.

Last year, ODIHR conducted **19 election-related activities**. This included the deployment of **eight Election Observation Missions (EOMs)**, **one Limited Election Observation Mission (LEOM)** and **five Election Assessment Missions (EAM)**. Aspects of **five** electoral processes were followed by **Election Expert Teams (EET)**.

On a number of election observation missions we have **joined efforts with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly** and other parliamentary institutions. I am pleased to note that since last summer our co-operation with OSCE PA has worked very well and I wish to commend leadership of Parliamentary Assembly for its constructive and cooperative attitude.

In total, over **2,000 people from 48 participating States** and 2 Partner for Co-operation countries took part in ODIHR election-related activities last year. This included observers deployed under a **Fund for Diversification**, which is aimed at supporting the participation of observers from participating States that do not regularly send observers. In 2013, the Fund has allowed the **deployment of 27 long-term and 72 short-term observers**.

In a continued effort to fulfil its mandate in an impartial, professional, and accountable manner, in 2013, ODIHR **published 57 reports**, including Needs Assessment Reports (NAM), interim reports, statements of preliminary findings and conclusions, and final reports.

Our Office has also maintained efforts to engage in a **dialogue on follow-up** to our recommendations with participating States between elections. A number of ODIHR follow-up activities took place in 2013. This included ten visits to **present final reports** to stakeholders in Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Lithuania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Ukraine, and the United States of America, as well as visits to **discuss electoral issues** and **possible reforms** to several participating States. In addition, jointly with the Council of Europe's Venice Commission, ODIHR conducted **legal reviews** with regard to four OSCE participating States, including the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, and (two reviews for) Ukraine.

With the view to strengthen the implementation of OSCE commitments, in 2013, ODIHR conducted a "**Review of Electoral Legislation and Practice in OSCE participating States**" (ROELAP) and presented it at the end of October. It represented a synthesis of ODIHR election-related reports published between 2010 and 2012 against OSCE commitments as well as other international standards for democratic elections and good electoral practice. While identifying both commendable practices and shortcomings, the review pointed to the need for the participating States to step up their efforts of following-up to ODIHR's recommendations, in line with their OSCE commitments.

ODIHR's election **observation methodology** continued to evolve in response to emerging needs. Last year we launched two **new handbooks** on specific elements of its election observation methodology, a Handbook for the **Observation of New Voting Technologies** and the second edition of the Guidelines for **Reviewing a Legal Framework for Elections**.

Our Office also continued to assist the States in **preparing future observers** for observation assignments. In 2013 we conducted two trainings for short-term observers and one for long-term observers. In total, over the course of the year, **30 potential long-term and 67 short-term observers** benefitted from the training. ODIHR has also continued to administer its **e-learning course** for short-term observers in English and Russian languages. At the end of last year, more than 1,700 participants were actively taking part in the course and more than 800 had already completed it.

In addition, ODIHR maintained high interest in collaboration with international partners within the framework of the **Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation**. On 17-19 September 2013, ODIHR hosted the 8th Implementation Declaration of Principles Meeting, which brought together over 60 representatives of the Declaration of Principles signatory organizations.

Our Office also continued to provide **election-related support** to OSCE **Partner for Co-operation countries**. We maintained engagement with Tunisia, having shared election-related expertise and methodology at three events in 2013. In

addition, following the Permanent Council decision, ODIHR has already deployed an **Election Support Team** for the 5 April 2014 presidential and provincial council elections **in Afghanistan**.

Looking further at the **calendar for 2014**, our Office has already conducted NAMs to Belgium, Hungary, and Lithuania, and is preparing to deploy one to United States of America in May. Observation activities in connection with elections in Serbia, Hungary, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have been launched, and preparations are underway for the observation of the electoral process in Georgia. In view of the announced presidential election in Ukraine for 25 May and the invitation extended to ODIHR to observe this election, ODIHR will deploy an EOM to provide a comprehensive assessment of the electoral process. We are also looking ahead to other elections later this year, including in Latvia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey, Moldova, Uzbekistan, Sweden, and Romania.

In an effort to address the continued **shortfall in the numbers of seconded observers**, ODIHR recently established a separate extra-budgetary Election Observation **Sustainability Fund**. This fund will be used to bridge the gap between the number of requested and seconded observers by directly recruiting additional observers. The new fund will thus supplement the secondment process, which will remain the primary mechanism for the recruitment of observers. The existing Diversification Fund would also be retained as a tool for ensuring a geographic diversity and balanced composition of observation missions. These measures will help maintain professionalism, impartiality and independence in the conduct of election observation, in line with OSCE Ministerial Decision 19/06. Therefore I would like to call on the participating States to continue to support ODIHR's election-related activities through the secondment process and extra-budgetary contributions to the Diversification and the new Sustainability Fund.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the area of **tolerance and non-discrimination**, our Office continues to serve as a collection point on information on hate crimes in the OSCE region. While 51 participating States indicate that they **collect** some **data on hate crime**, only 27 informed ODIHR about developments in their jurisdictions for the 2013 edition of the annual report on hate crimes.

In order to publicize the information received from participating States and civil society, ODIHR will **launch the hate crime reporting website** in order to raise awareness of hate crimes and official responses to them. The website is developed as part of our mandate to "*serve as a collection point for information and statistics*" on hate crimes in the OSCE region. Last year, we finalized the building of the website and uploaded data submitted by participating States and civil society from 2009 to

2012 (in the last four years). The website, which will be introduced to the Human Dimension Committee next week, presents the data, institutional, policy and legal developments related to hate crime prevention and response in an attractive and user-friendly manner.

In 2014, we will continue to assist participating States to build their **capacity to respond to hate crimes**. Our Office will resume implementation of Training against Hate Crimes for Law Enforcement (TAHCLE) in Italy and will follow up to the implementation in Bulgaria, Montenegro and Poland. We will also work with other participating States that have expressed interest in this programme.

As demands for ODIHR's assistance often exceed our capacity, ODIHR has applied for the European Commission call for proposals to implement a project addressing **manifestations of racism and xenophobia**, specifically hate crimes. The project proposal named *Hate Crime Justice Project* will promote comprehensive approach to preventing and responding to hate crimes in Greece, Bulgaria, Italy and Romania. The project, which builds on existing partnerships and close co-operation with authorities in these countries, foresees capacity building of the criminal justice system actors, awareness raising of authorities about the necessity to have a comprehensive approach including on data collection, public information campaigns and outreach to civil society at the national, regional and EU-wide level.

ODIHR's **partners in this project** are Association of European Police Colleges and International Association of Prosecutors. The overall value of this two-year project proposal is 2, 2 million Euro and, should the funding be approved, ODIHR will have to fundraise additional half a million Euro. In this regard, my Office will work closely with you and potential donors to identify funding opportunities.

We will also continue to work closely with **civil society to build their capacity** to recognize hate crimes and to facilitate dialogue and information sharing between civil society and the relevant authorities. Last year, ODIHR evaluated training activities delivered to non-governmental representatives to assess the impact of these activities. The evaluation results indicated that participants indicated changes in their behaviour and attitudes following the training. The evaluation results also highlighted that initiatives with civil society have a longer-lasting impact if there is a consistent follow-up, mentoring and coaching of NGOs. Based on these findings, ODIHR plans to develop an extra-budgetary project proposal that will inform its activities with civil society in the next two years.

A high-level **conference on tolerance and non-discrimination**, including human rights youth education on tolerance and non-discrimination in Tirana provided an opportunity to review and assess progress achieved in implementing commitments on tolerance and non-discrimination. More than 200 participants exchanged information on initiatives to address intolerance and discrimination. Many conference participants expressed the view that integrative educational

initiatives are the only sustainable strategy for eradicating the root causes of intolerance and discrimination and highlighted the need for a robust hate crime and anti-discrimination framework.

In collaboration with the Ukrainian Chairmanship last year, ODIHR organized an expert meeting on the **security challenges faced by Jewish communities** across the OSCE region. In 2014 we plan to organize an event focusing on the **security needs of Muslim communities** in late April in Vienna. In 2013, ODIHR organized two training events on combating intolerance and hate crimes against Muslims and will also organize an event focusing on specific needs and **intolerance faced by Christian communities** in the OSCE region.

This year OSCE will mark the **10th anniversary of the Berlin Declaration** when participating States pledged to enact measures to respond to violent manifestations of anti-Semitism and to educational activities to raise awareness about anti-Semitism. We are witnesses that anti-Semitism remains prevalent even today and this commemorative event will serve to explore challenges that our societies face ten years later.

ODIHR stands at the disposal to the Chairmanship and participating States to explore how this anniversary can be marked in a meaningful way particularly in light of the upcoming 70th anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz (which will be marked next year). On a similar note, ODIHR recently organized the roundtable with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) on the promotion of the **Holocaust Remembrance** in Moldova. We will continue working with IHRA and participating States to promote Holocaust remembrance in the OSCE region.

As education is a key to a comprehensive response in **prevention of violent manifestations of intolerance and bias**, ODIHR will continue to work with participating States to promote the use of the *Guidelines for Educators on Countering Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims*, which were developed in co-operation with the Council of Europe and UNESCO. Last year, ODIHR completed a series of promotional roundtables. This year, ODIHR will work on the development of **educational materials on combating bias against Roma and Sinti**.

After the extensive consultation process on the **Guidelines on the Legal Personality of Religious or Belief Communities**, we will present this document to the Venice Commission on 20 March 2014. ODIHR also plans series of activities to present the Guidelines and training activities in order to raise awareness about international standards pertaining to freedom of religion or belief.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Within our **Roma and Sinti programme** the main achievement last year was the development of **second Status Report** on the Implementation of the OSCE Roma and Sinti Action Plan. As you are probably aware this report assessed policies and actions by participating States since 2008 while providing a general overview on the situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE area.

It was launched at the third Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting (SHDM) dedicated to Roma and Sinti issues, marking 10 years since the adoption of the OSCE Action Plan. Prior to this meeting ODIHR hosted a **civil society consultation meeting** with over 40 Roma and Sinti representatives from the OSCE region to **enable their participation**, including particularly Roma and Sinti women and youth in the **discourse on policies of their concern**. Their active engagement at the SHDM on the implementation of the OSCE commitments relating to Roma and Sinti is also reflected in the adopted MC Decision (4/2013) in Kyiv with specific focus on Roma and Sinti women, children and youth.

To enhance participation of Roma and Sinti youth and empower their communities in exercising their rights and engage in improving their situation our Office has initiated an innovative programme the **Roma Youth Initiative**. Projects implemented in Italy, Czech Republic, Romania and Spain stimulated grass roots engagement to counter school drop-out, improve performance in education or to enable access to health, education and social services.

In 2014, we are **planning to follow up on recommendation** made in 2013 Status report and on the **field visit reports** conducted in the past to Romania, Hungary, Italy and the Czech Republic. In addition, ODIHR's Roma and Sinti programme will build on past experience to enhance **active participation** of Roma and Sinti and improve the **relations between the Roma communities and the police**. A priority of the Roma and Sinti programme in the upcoming years is to ensure a strong **gender mainstreaming** component in all its activities to account for the different needs of women and men and archive greater gender equality between Roma and Sinti women and men.

As a follow up to the **Czech Republic field visit report** in 2012, we will continue to support of the project "*Mum, dad, I want to go to school*", to raise awareness and motivate Roma parents not to send their children in practical (special) schools as well as how to work with their children after school. In addition, ODIHR will **publish Early Education Guidelines** for parents and teachers aiming to increase enrolment of Roma children in early education and their equal access to quality education. The guidelines will be presented on 29 May in Prague at a roundtable discussing the actions undertaken by authorities to implement desegregation policies in education following the ECHR judgement in 2007 and ODIHRs recommendation from 2012.

With regard to **Roma and Sinti and Police issues**, ODIHR will, in co-operation with the OSCE SPMU and the HCNM, host an expert meeting on 8 April to map the current challenges in this area and review past activities and experiences for a future roadmap to improve the relations between the police and Roma and Sinti and OSCE's work with the national authorities in this regard. In addition, the Roma and Sinti Programme is currently assessing the opportunity to conduct a field visit to Slovakia on Roma and police issues in June this year.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the liquidation of the former "gypsy camp" (*Zigeunerlager*) Auschwitz –Birkenau on 2 August 1944, a day recognised by the Roma and Sinti worldwide to remember the genocide during the Nazi regime. We have sent a questionnaire to the OSCE participating States to map their efforts in teaching about the Roma and Sinti genocide but also on special national commemoration events dedicated to the **Roma and Sinti victims of the National Socialism**. ODIHR will publish a technical report on the practices in teaching about the Roma genocide and good practices in this regard as a practical guide for teachers. ODIHR's work on raising awareness about the persecution of Roma and Sinti during the Nazi regime is connected to assist participating States in discussing and combating current challenges and forms of racism and discrimination against Roma and Sinti.

Our Office further continued its **co-operation with the European Commission** on enhancing efforts for Roma and Sinti integration in the Western Balkans through its regional project **Best Practices for Roma Integration (BPRI)**, but also through Contact Point's expert advice and participation in the European Commission hosted high level meetings in the region, an initiative which is still on-going. This project that promoted the exchange of experience and regional co-operation will be concluded this month, but the situation of Roma and related groups in the Western Balkans region will remain a focus for our work. Special attention was paid to **empowerment of young Roma** and concrete **activities in Roma settlements** supported through **small grants**.

BPRI project developed a programme for **Young Roma Professionals** in order to develop their capacities and empower them to participate in decision making. A total of 25 Young Roma Professionals from throughout the Western Balkans completed the programme. Roma still face many **obstacles in joining the policy making processes** and BPRI sought out best practices in this field at the local level. A regional report published last year identified over 30 best practices in anti-discrimination and participation of Roma in local decision making.

Small grants were concrete way for working at the local level and improving the living conditions in Roma settlements. In total, 20 local projects were funded, often introducing or expanding the **infrastructure in Roma settlements** (sewage, road paving, access to potable water, street lighting etc.), but some also focused on

education of Roma children and one municipality used the small grant to **open a municipal office for Roma issues**. These types of activities have an immediate impact on the quality of life and access to services for Roma, but also benefit non-Roma populations and improve neighborhood relations.

The project also **produced a number of resource materials** that can be used by organizations and governments interested in promoting Roma integration. This includes **two regional reports** – one on **anti-discrimination** mentioned above and a second report on **housing of Roma** which was launched a few weeks ago in Tirana. In addition, BPRI published training material for primary school teachers aiming to combat discrimination and promote tolerance in their classrooms. The project team also worked with Roma Researchers who published studies on the implementation of laws in their own settlement, identifying gaps and providing recommendations for better inclusion. These resources are available on the BPRI and ODIHR websites and provide many options for actors who are interested in supporting the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan for Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti adopted in 2003.

The Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues **will further build in all its activities on the lessons learned** from the Best Practice for Roma Integration project, particularly within its activities to enhance Roma women’s participation and to build capacity of Roma and Sinti youth through the Roma Youth Initiative and to promote models how Roma communities at local level can exercise their social and civic rights.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the framework of our **democratization** activities ODIHR’s expertise on **women’s political participation** is increasingly sought and utilized across the OSCE region. This year we are marking the Tenth Anniversary of the OSCE Gender Action Plan and the Fifth Anniversary of the Athens MC Decision 7/09 on Women’s Participation in Political and Public Life. Last year ODIHR presented its knowledge tools on gender equality in elected office in 16 OSCE participating States¹ both east and west of Vienna and in several Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.

Our Office has steadily increased its efforts to **strengthen democratic and representative parliaments** in OSCE States, in close co-operation with national parliaments, OSCE Field Operations and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. In line with its aim to serve as a “*knowledge hub*” of parliamentary good practice, in 2013 ODIHR **published two studies**, the *Background Study: Professional and Ethical Standards for Parliamentarians* as well as *A Comparative Study of Structures for*

¹ Including Albania, Austria, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Sweden, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey and Ukraine.

Women MPs in the OSCE Region, which capture good practices in enhancing ethical behavior and gender equality in legislatures.

ODIHR also continues to offer the *Guidelines on Political Party Regulation* (developed in co-operation with the Venice Commission) as a means to **support the development of transparent and accountable multi-party systems** in OSCE participating States. By organizing the **Political Party Seminar** on 10 and 11 July 2013 in Warsaw, ODIHR gathered 50 experts from 24 countries across the OSCE region to discuss different measures that political parties and OSCE participating States can take to make political parties more transparent, inclusive, accountable and democratic. In July 2014 ODIHR plans to invite a broad range of OSCE States, civil society and experts to continue the discussion on effective regulation of political parties during a follow up seminar.

Our Office continued implementation of the project “*Women in Political Parties*” in 2013, aimed at building the capacity of political party stakeholders to apply voluntary measures to **promote women’s political participation**. ODIHR organized training events in Albania and Kyrgyzstan, including a regional women’s leadership workshop in Bishkek in November 2013, which brought together 35 women politicians from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to discuss strategies to facilitate women’s advancement in political parties. ODIHR also finalized its *Handbook on Measures to Promote Women’s Participation in Political Parties*, to be published in 2014, which focuses on how political party leaders, women politicians and civil society organizations can work to promote greater gender equality within parties.

On the margins of the last HDIM we launched, in co-operation with the Swedish Folke Bernadotte Academy, trial monitoring tool *Handbook for Monitoring Administrative Justice*. This publication which combines a compilation of fair-trial standards with practical guidance on **monitoring administrative proceedings** for compliance with these standards, serves as a reference tool to support monitoring activities and awareness-raising initiatives on fair trial standards in administrative proceedings. The Handbook complements the other two publications that ODIHR launched in 2012, namely *Trial Monitoring: A Reference Manual for Practitioners* (revised) and *Legal Digest of International Fair Trial Rights* with the purpose of maximizing OSCE expertise in monitoring trials, building the capacity of partner NGOs and thereby contributing to the sustainability of OSCE trial monitoring programs.

Based on these tools, our Office continued strengthening the capacity of OSCE Field Missions and NGOs in carrying out **trial monitoring exercises**. In 2013, such capacity building activities benefited civil society trial monitors from Belarus, Russian Federation and Ukraine as well as from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. In 2014, the tools will be further disseminated and capacity building activities will be organized for civil society trial monitors from Kyrgyzstan and South Eastern Europe.

A good example of ODIHR's support to OSCE participating States in the field of trial monitoring is the ongoing **monitoring of trials of former senior officials in Georgia**, which commenced on 20 February 2013 upon invitation of the Georgian government. A team of international ODIHR monitors is monitoring trials to assess the compliance of relevant domestic law and trial proceedings with international fair trial standards. **To date, 281 hearings, in 14 cases have been observed** and ODIHR will release an interim report next week, and endeavours to issue a final report later this year describing any shortcomings identified during the monitoring activities and provide recommendations aimed at enhancing the administration of criminal justice in line with OSCE commitments.

Our Office continued assisting participating States to share expertise and good practices in **improving criminal justice systems** in 2013. We plan to organize the Fifth **Expert Forum on Criminal Justice for Central Asia** in 2014 in Bishkek in June (subject to receipt of funds) with the support of OSCE Field Operations in the region. The Forum has emerged as a leading regional platform for professional discussion on criminal justice and judicial reform, human rights in criminal procedure, and harmonization of national legislation with international criminal justice standards. It brings together key stakeholders in criminal justice reform, such as national parliaments, ministries of justice, judges, prosecutors, lawyers, academics and civil society, and serves to facilitate discussions on recent reform initiatives, current challenges and the way forward in the region's criminal justice sector.

ODIHR continued its work on the promotion of **judicial independence** in support to OSCE participating States reform efforts. In April 2013 in Yerevan, ODIHR hosted a roundtable on "Implementation of the 2012-2016 Strategic Programme for Legal and Judicial Reforms in the Republic of Armenia" with the OSCE Office in Yerevan and the Council of Europe. The event provided a platform for dialogue on planned judicial reforms and exchange of good practices related to the independence, accountability and professionalism of judges, and gathered around 50 participants, including the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Armenia, representatives from governmental and judicial authorities, civil society and other stakeholders of judicial reform. The conclusions developed at the event enriched the continuing reform debate which ultimately led to the adoption of a new law to strengthen judicial self-governance and the independence of individual judges.

In the field of **war crimes justice**, ODIHR continued to strengthen the capacities of judicial authorities through **10 training sessions** and **peer-to-peer meetings** in seven locations throughout South Eastern Europe, benefitting 212 practitioners working on war crimes trials as judges, prosecutors, defense counsel and witness support providers. The activities focused on facilitating good practice exchange on

modes of criminal liability for violations of international humanitarian and criminal law and trial advocacy skills specific to war crimes trials.²

ODIHR continued to assist participating States in following up on recommendations from EOM reports to foster access to justice and effective legal remedies for **election related disputes** in accordance with OSCE commitments. Following a roundtable on election dispute resolution in Kyrgyzstan in June 2012, ODIHR organized a follow-up roundtable with the OSCE Mission to Serbia and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) in November 2013. Our Office published a report containing key conclusions and recommendations to assist future reform efforts in this field. In follow-up to roundtables organized with OSCE Field Operations in Kyrgyzstan in 2012 and Serbia in 2013, ODIHR plans to organize a regional roundtable on election dispute resolution for Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus in 2014.

Last year ODIHR produced a total of 23 **legal opinions** for OSCE participating States upon request on a number of different human rights topics, such as freedom of association, freedom of assembly, rule of law and the judiciary, gender equality, domestic violence, non-discrimination and human rights in the fight against terrorism.

In 2013, ODIHR continued to update the ODIHR - Venice Commission *Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly* and in co-operation with the Venice Commission commenced the drafting of legislative *Guidelines on Freedom of Association*, which are expected to be completed in 2014. These Guidelines are increasingly cited by other international organizations or institutions (e.g. the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, the European Court of Human Rights, the FRA – European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights) as authoritative references and standard-setting documents in these fields.

Our **legislative online database** www.Legislationonline.org, which provides direct access to key international human rights norms and standards, as well as domestic human dimension related legislation from all OSCE participating States registered a more than 20 per cent increase in its online page visits in 2013 (compared to 2012).

ODIHR also assists OSCE participating States in reform efforts related to enhancing the transparency and openness of **democratic lawmaking processes** and participating States can request such assistance; positive examples for such assistance are Georgia and Armenia, where ODIHR has agreed to conduct reviews of the lawmaking processes in 2014, as well as Serbia, where, following a two-year process of assistance, ODIHR facilitated discussions leading to a Regulatory Reform Roadmap in 2013, to be endorsed by key stakeholders in 2014.

² The activities form part of the project WCJP – Phase II, which is a follow-up to Phase I funded by the EU and implemented by ODIHR from May 2010 until October 2011.

ODIHR continued to promote OSCE commitments on **freedom of movement and human contacts** following recommendations made at the second SHDM last year. ODIHR also conducted research on cross border mobility in the OSCE region and the impact of visa regimes on travel between OSCE participating States, which will be launched as a **Baseline Study on Cross-Border Mobility** in Vienna at Workshop focused on OSCE participating States and consular experts in May this year. The Study aims to provide an overview of cross-border travel freedoms in the OSCE region and focuses on visa application mechanisms and best practices in operating visa regimes which successfully counter illegal migration, but at the same time facilitate cross border travel for legitimate purposes.

In the follow-up on EOM recommendations on **voter registration** our Office is assisting OSCE participating States in reforming their population registration systems to increase the accuracy of voter lists. Upon request of the State Election Commission of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, ODIHR conducted an assessment of the sharing of personal information from the public registers in the process of updating of the voter register in December 2013.

Our Office also enhanced its **co-operation with the OSCE Mediterranean Partners** for Co-operation, in line with the Ministerial Council Decision No. 5/11 and ODIHR's mandate. Within this framework, we implemented the programme "Increasing Understanding of the OSCE Human Dimension, providing support in the fields of elections, legislative assistance, parliamentary strengthening, women's political participation, gender equality, and human rights. Throughout last year ODIHR implemented a total of 28 activities, benefitting 481 Mediterranean Partner civil society and government representatives directly.

ODIHR provided **legislative assistance** in the fields of political parties, freedom of assembly, national human rights institutions, and anti-terrorism. The legal opinions examined compliance of the legislation with OSCE commitments and other international human rights standards, and included recommendations on how to enhance such compliance. ODIHR Opinions were followed by consultative meetings with key government authorities, including the Ministry of Human Rights and Transitional Justice and the National Constituent Assembly of Tunisia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the field of **human rights**, in the past year we continued to carry out **human rights monitoring** in a number of areas. We started with second cycle of assembly monitoring. As in the first round, our observations focused on assemblies that may pose particular challenges for the authorities and the organizers.

Our delegation was in August 2013 in the United States of America and at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for an **assessment visit** to gather information on proceedings before military commissions involving **Guantanamo detainees** and on other human rights issues surrounding the detention of individuals at Guantanamo. The purpose of this visit was also to assess the feasibility of monitoring the proceedings before the military commissions. We are currently carrying out a broader human rights assessment of the situation with a view to producing a public report on its findings and recommendations by mid-2014.

Our Office is finalizing drafting the Guidelines on the **Protection of Human Rights Defenders**. These Guidelines will **be launched on 10-11 June 2014** at a conference on human rights defenders organized with the Chairmanship. Before publication, a draft of the Guidelines will be shared for comments and discussed with all participating States at a meeting we are planning to organize in May.

In November 2013, ODIHR hosted a **strategic planning meeting of the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI)**. The meeting built on the long-standing engagement by ODIHR with NHRIs, and provided a platform to discuss how our Office can best support NHRIs belonging to ENNHRI. ODIHR plans to organize an NHR Academy in summer 2014, contributing to the strengthening of the NHRIs by addressing human rights topics of interest and relevance to them.

We launched ODIHR's Human Rights Discussion Series for representatives of the FSC in April 2013, with an expert meeting on the Armed Forces and Women's Access to Combat Positions. The second instalment of the Series took place in October when the role of ombuds institutions in **protecting human rights of armed forces personnel** was discussed in a similar format. We have also in February and me personally in November addressed the FSC's Security Dialogue to further engage on these issues.

Our Office has also continued with the implementation of the project on Human Rights Protection for **Trafficked Persons** and Vulnerable Groups in Central Asia. Law enforcement officers, prosecutors and lawyers have appreciated the opportunity to learn and exchange experiences on building national referral mechanisms and the provision of legal assistance to victims of trafficking.

I am pleased to relay that ODIHR's **Guiding Principles on Human Rights in the Return of Trafficked Persons** is due for publication in mid-2014. The long-standing and diligent effort by ODIHR to highlight the obligation of states to respect and protect the human rights of the victims of trafficking in the process of identification and in ensuring their access to justice will close the loop by addressing human rights compliant policies, procedures and practices on return in the OSCE region. The publication was born out of the need to provide guidance for government

and civil society actors on which standards are relevant in the process of returning trafficked persons.

In November last year ODIHR launched **Human Rights in Counter-Terrorism Investigations: A Practical Manual for Law Enforcement Officers** that is a product of more than two years of successful co-operation with TNTD's Strategic Police Matters Unit. The guidebook on Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism (VERLT): A Community Policing Approach, which is a joint effort of our Office and TNTD Action Terrorism Unit will be launched on 17 March.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me now revert to the issue that has occupied us all during last few weeks: **situation in Ukraine**. As I have already conveyed to you earlier last week our Office is at disposal to provide assistance within our mandate, to this participating State.

Ukrainian government has already invited ODIHR to **observe upcoming presidential elections** on 25 May and we will deploy sizable EOM with 100 long term and 900 short term observers. The advance team is already in Kyiv and a core team of experts is planned to arrive by mid-March. They will be joined by the long term observers at the end of March, while short term observers will join the mission approximately one week before election day.

Last week we also received request from Ministry of Foreign Affairs to conduct (together with HCNM) **Human Rights Assessment Mission** to assess the human rights and minority rights situation in Crimea, against the background of the recent developments in Ukraine. I can inform you that we already last week sent to Ukraine advance team that is identifying opportunities for a full scale deployment of Human Rights Monitors to the regions. I would also like to thank participating States for quick reaction in funding this important mission.

Last but not least we also stand ready to engage in **Trial Monitoring** in the framework of events that occurred at Maidan in Kyiv before and on 20 February 2014.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

With this address I have tried to give you an overview of our ongoing activities as well as our recent work. This work cannot be done without your co-operation. I am pleased that the consensus was reached earlier today at Preparatory Committee concerning the adoption of **Human Dimension Events package** for this year. This decision has been long overdue. I thank again the Chairmanship for their timely and balanced proposal for Human Dimension Events, but I would also like to underline that early adoption of this decision by participating states is essential for our Office to organize good and quality events that you all expect from us.

In conclusion I wish to highlight two things:

1. It is extremely important that participating States reach early consensus on the **appointment of my successor**. It is essential for a normal operation of ODIHR to have a Director in place, with full mandate by participating States.
2. OSCE is now in midst of **Helsinki+40 process**. This is extremely important process that is to chart future course of our organization. We have been invited by Ambassador Strohal, coordinator on strengthening Human Dimension, to contribute to this process. I sincerely appreciate this invitation and we have already sent our contribution last week, but let me use this opportunity to highlight three practical suggestions that would make the ODIHR much better able to implement its mandate and to assist participating States more effectively:
 - a) All **seconded positions** in ODIHR should be **converted into contracted**³. This would represent a decisive step towards more stable fairer and less precarious staffing of our Office.
 - b) All **staff** needed for the conduct of ODIHR mandated activities, including all long- and short term observers on EOMs, **should be funded from Unified Budget**.
 - c) ODIHR post table and budget should be amended so as to **establish position of ODIHR liaison officer in Vienna**. This would enable improved communication with participating States and enhance co-operation with other OSCE structures.

With such changes participating States would create much better conditions for this Office to do its work. This would also be the best welcoming gift that I could imagine for my successor.

Thank you.

³ As of 10 March 2014 there are 55 (comparing to 62 respective UB 2013 posts) UB contracted P-Staff and 10 UB Seconded Staff at (comparing to 16 respective UB 2013 posts) at ODIHR.