



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1196
Vienna, 4 October 2018**

**EU statement in response to the report by Director of the
Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
(ODIHR) on the Human Dimension Implementation
Meeting**

We would like to thank Director Gísladóttir for her report. We would also like to thank the Italian Chairmanship, the whole team in ODIHR, and Poland, our host country, for organizing the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in a particularly difficult context this year.

The Human Dimension Implementation Meeting remains a unique platform for engaging with civil society organisations and for listening to independent voices, exchanging information and good practices, but moreover an opportunity for all of us to be held to account in relation to our OSCE commitments. We commend the many participating States who treat HDIM as an opportunity to engage meaningfully with civil society and the international community on issues of concern. At the same time, we regret that Turkey did not join consensus on the Decision regarding the HDIM agenda and also chose not to attend the meeting, missing a valuable opportunity to engage in dialogue with other participating States and civil society. We also once again stress the principle that participating States should not use organisations set up to promote government views to discredit independent voices and distract attention from real issues and challenges.

The EU acknowledges that the open and inclusive character of the OSCE in relation to civil society organizations makes events like HDIM unique and that this must be maintained, as set out in our joint commitments. We thank those human rights defenders, representatives of civil society and

journalists who have actively engaged in the discussions, some of them giving moving and brave testimonies. Any action that will unduly limit civil society participation must be avoided.

During HDIM, many speakers deplored the suppression of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the attacks and mounting pressure faced by human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, the intimidation and violence against journalists and other media actors, as well as increasing intolerance in many parts of the OSCE region. We heard tragic stories of human rights abuses and violations of international obligations and OSCE commitments. These worrying trends represent serious challenges to our comprehensive security.

We have also listened to the concerns and recommendations directed to us. We do acknowledge our own challenges and shortcomings and we remain committed to addressing them and to continuing a genuine dialogue with independent civil society, which remains a valuable partner for the implementation of our commitments.

We remain deeply concerned about the dire situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol since its illegal annexation by Russia which we condemn and will not recognise. We regret the attempts by some participants of the HDIM to create confusion regarding the capacity under which they took the floor, or to use a legitimate opportunity for discussion and dialogue to make points relating to a situation that is in contradiction with Helsinki principles. But their attempts to whitewash the human rights situation in Crimea have not succeeded. We remain concerned also by the human rights crisis which continues to mount in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations in eastern Ukraine. The EU reiterates its unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence. We remain also concerned about the human rights situation in Russia which continues to fall below its OSCE commitments and international human rights obligations. We also see a downward trend with regard to human rights situation across much of Central Asia, Azerbaijan and Turkey. We remain concerned about discrimination against ethnic

Georgians in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and we reiterate our firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders.

Regrettably, once more, some voices were not heard as the practice of imposing travel bans is still used by some participating States. We are also concerned by reports of intimidation and reprisal of civil society representatives or their family members for exercising their rights by taking part in HDIM. We call on all participating States to refrain from such unacceptable actions and abide by their OSCE commitments. It is the responsibility of States to ensure that those who speak up for human rights, be it in their home countries, or in any international fora, are protected.

As human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression – both online and offline - and freedom of religion or belief, democracy and the rule of law represent the core of our OSCE commitments and should guide all participants in all OSCE events, including HDIM, we are concerned by intolerant statements that were made during the meeting. To those who called for unequal treatment and discrimination we say that the Universal Declaration on Human Rights is clear that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and “everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration”.

In this context and in line with existing longstanding commitments, we remain firmly committed to the promotion of a comprehensive human rights based approach to the fight against all forms of intolerance and discrimination as the most effective way of countering this phenomenon.

We encourage ODIHR to continue its efforts in raising the profile of the meeting and attracting independent civil society from across the OSCE region. We also have a role to play in this regard. We also reiterate the importance the EU attaches for this very reason to the timely adoption of the HDIM Decisions in the beginning of the year as set out in PC.DEC 476/2002.

HDIM has proven, once more, that OSCE commitments and their implementation are more relevant than ever and we call on all participating States to live up to them and reverse existing violations. All participating States must respect the mandates of ODIHR, HCNM and RFoM as essential instruments in their efforts to fulfil the OSCE commitments. And we, the participating States, must also ensure that the OSCE institutions are adequately resourced to play their indispensable role.

We see the upcoming OSCE Ministerial Council as a good opportunity to take forward recommendations from the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting with the aim of reaffirming and strengthening our OSCE Human Dimension commitments. We very much welcome the input of civil society representatives in this regard.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country ICELAND, as well as SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.