



STATEMENT

ENGLISH only

**In Response to Ms. Ingibjörg Gísladóttir Director of the OSCE Office for
Democratic Institutions and Human Rights**

**as delivered by Ambassador Armen Papikyan, Permanent Representative of
Armenia, at the 1219th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
March 07, 2019**

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to start by welcoming and thanking Ms. Ingibjörg Gísladóttir, ODIHR Director for her appearance to the Permanent Council and presentation of the ODIHR annual report.

Along with the presentation of the work of the ODIHR in 2018, the report contains important assessment of the current trends of democracy and human rights in the OSCE area. We agree that Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a basis of human dimension commitments of Helsinki Final Act and we should safeguard our human dimension commitments for common good of our region and people living therein.

We also subscribe to your view that “choice” between human rights and security is false one. It is frequently recalled in the conflict situations, as in some cases conflicts are used to restrict space of civil society and free media. However, in our view, enjoying human rights do not contradict but strengthens security even in challenging regional context. The recent democratic transition in Armenia is a good case in point.

Almost after one year of democratic transition Armenia has emerged with stronger societal consensus over human rights and security issues. The public trust towards democratic institutions and elections have been a key outcome of this peaceful change.

Civil society of Armenia has been playing important role in democratic transition. We sincerely believe that the open and frank dialogue with civil society is essential in overcoming current downwards trend of public trust in democracy and democratic institutions in the OSCE area you pinpointed in the report. Therefore, any attempt to change existing practice of civil society participation in OSCE human dimension events particularly in the name of security concerns would mean that space for civil society and their critical voices are restricted not only in some participating states but in the entire OSCE region.

We recognize that systematic violations of human rights are root causes for many conflicts. As far as the ODIHR involvement in the conflict related issues is concerned, we believe that it should be done in fair and even manner without prioritizing one conflict-affected group over the others. The human rights of people residing in conflict

areas cannot be neglected and both access to them and their access to the Organization should not be impeded.

We took note of growing activities of the ODIHR in promoting Tolerance and Non-Discrimination. The 2018 publication on hate crime against Christians is particularly helpful in this regard, as it may assist various stakeholders in identifying, recognizing and combatting hate crimes against Christians. Some of thematic samples of the publication which illustrate the nature of hate crime against Christians such as destruction of Christian cemeteries and crosses indicate, unfortunately, some sad realities in the OSCE area.

Genocide remembrance and education is another important part of promoting tolerance and non-discrimination. We expect stronger cooperation with other international organizations and initiatives in this regard.

Madam Director,

The ODIHR has been an important partner for Armenia in raising democratic profile and promoting human rights. Taking this opportunity, I would like to thank ODIHR for its continued support to Armenia in the course of democratic transition in particularly for leading international observation mission to the Early Parliamentary Elections in December 2018 despite apparent time constrains.

The recommendations which were put forward in the Final Report of the ODIHR Election Observation Mission will be carefully assessed. The electoral reform has been an important priority of new Armenian Government and these recommendations can serve as important reference point.

Armenia will continue its close cooperation with ODIHR in implementing human dimension commitments in number of frameworks including ODIHR thematic activities, bilateral projects and the Armenia Cooperation Programme.

Thank you.