



**PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF PORTUGAL
TO THE OSCE**

**Statement by Portugal on the report by ODIHR Director at
the 1395th meeting of the Permanent Council
20 October 2022**

Mr. Chair,

In addition to the EU statement, I would like to convey the following remarks on a national basis.

Director Mecacci,

Portugal thanks you and your able team at the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights for the report presented today. **We commend ODIHR for delivering its mandate in an effective and impartial manner**, especially under the present challenging circumstances, and for providing assistance to all of OSCE participating States through a large body of programs. We welcome, in particular, the continued efforts in supporting human rights defenders, freedom of assembly and association, torture prevention and in increasing the political participation of women and persons in vulnerable situations.

Unfortunately, the report confirms the unprecedented setback in the human rights situation in the OSCE area.

We commend the efforts ODIHR has been undertaking in light of the dire humanitarian situation and the systematic attacks against civilian infrastructure and populations in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. **ODIHR's monitoring and documentation endeavours are of utmost importance**, as they contribute to bring light upon the blatant violations of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights and are **an important element towards accountability**. Portugal will continue to support efforts conducive to holding to account perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity.



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Despite the unprecedented challenges your Office faces, **its work is more important than ever**, contributing to address not only the devastating humanitarian crisis caused by Russia's war in Ukraine, but also the brutal Russian repression of human rights against its own citizens and civil society organisations, as well as the crackdown on anti-war positions in Russia. We recall that the recent Moscow Mechanism on Russia made a clear connection between internal repression and external aggression. In **Belarus** too we continue to witness a violent crackdown on any form of dissent and opposition.

Reflecting the key importance of those who stand up for Democracy, the Rule of Law and Human Rights, we cannot but **applaud the decision to award the Nobel Peace Prize 2022** to Ales Bialiatski from Belarus, to the Russian human rights organisation Memorial, and to the Ukrainian human rights organisation Centre for Civil Liberties. We also applaud the decision to award the 2022 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought to the brave people of Ukraine. These prizes testify once again that **there is no peace without protection of human rights**.

Mr. Director,

We strongly support your calls for a constructive dialogue to increase respect for human rights. "Constructive criticism", as you name it, is not, as some participating States insist, a "finger-pointing exercise", much less an attempt to "interfere in domestic issues". On the contrary, it reflects a genuine and legitimate concern regarding the respect for OSCE commitments and principles, to which all participating States are equally accountable for. We all agreed that **human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy, and the rule of law do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of a State** – they lie at the core of the OSCE human dimension.

Mr. Chair, Mr. Director,

Let me finish by reiterating Portugal's **permanent availability to cooperate with ODIHR**, thanking the Office for, against the backdrop of such a bleak



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scenario, continuing to strongly provide support to participating States and civil society in order to promote our human dimension commitments as an integral and indispensable element of the comprehensive security concept.

Thank you.