



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR TACAN İLDEM
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF TURKEY**

**In response to Ambassador Janez Lenarcic, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic
Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)**

(989th Meeting of the Permanent Council, 13 March 2014)

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.

I join the previous speakers in warmly welcoming Ambassador Lenarcic back to the Permanent Council, albeit for the last time as Director of ODIHR. I would also like to thank him for the comprehensive and informative report he has presented today, which demonstrates once again the importance of this institution.

The significance of ODIHR's work cannot be stressed enough. In order to effectively fulfill its mandate, however, the Office requires our continued and unwavering political support. Needless to say, such support includes adequate funding in the annual Unified Budget, as the Director has also referred to. We must always bear in mind that ODIHR is an institution that we, as participating States of this Organization, have ourselves created to assist us in implementing our shared human dimension commitments. By keeping ODIHR strong, we are in effect helping ourselves to live up to those commitments.

Let me now touch upon some of the issues addressed by Ambassador Lenarcic.

We wholeheartedly support the Office's valuable activities in the vital field of Tolerance and Non-Discrimination. I have stated on numerous occasions that while focusing on important areas such as human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, it is also essential for the OSCE to devote equal time, concern and resources to combating intolerance and discrimination. As I have been alluding to on many occasions, we are talking about two sides of the same coin: where intolerance and discrimination flourish, human rights and fundamental freedoms are condemned to wither away. This is clearly evident today as the negative consequences of the economic crisis are appearing in many participating States in the form of a visible rise in racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia, with migrants being targeted as a particularly vulnerable group. In this context, we appreciate that this year's human dimension events package also includes a special HDIM day on "Rights of migrants" as well as an SHDM on "Human rights and fundamental freedoms in economic crisis".

In a similar vein, we commend ODIHR's work in the field of combating hate crimes. At the same time we encourage the Office to broaden the focus of the activities of its Tolerance and Non-Discrimination unit. There is much more that can and must be done in this field.

Within this framework, we are also pleased that the prevention of discrimination based on religion could be addressed within the scope of the Kiev Ministerial Council decision on the Freedom of Thought, Conscience, Religion or Belief. It now falls to ODIHR to develop new project proposals in order to assist participating States in implementing their related commitments, cooperating to the widest extent possible with the three Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination.

Mr. Chairperson,

ODIHR's election monitoring activities are a hallmark of the OSCE and a crucial component of the human dimension. We welcome the reestablishment of fruitful cooperation between the Office and the Parliamentary Assembly in this important area of activity. It is a source of concern, however, that election observation continues to be a cause for division and mistrust among participating States.

While supportive of ODIHR's election observation methodology, we believe an objective and consistent attitude towards all countries is necessary to maintain credibility and foster mutual trust. To this end, statements and reports concerning electoral processes can certainly benefit from a more sensitized presentation. Such statements, of technical nature rather than political, should be carefully calibrated so as to ensure that the engagement of the relevant stakeholders is not adversely affected, and that cooperation and dialogue are not hampered. We may also devise ways to shift our focus more strongly to the final evaluation reports rather than making hasty judgments based on first impressions from the preliminary findings.

The manner of presentation of technical findings should rather aim to actively motivate those concerned to adopt the recommended measures. At a time when we are actively engaged in the Helsinki +40 process, this could certainly contribute to developing a new, reinvigorated culture of engagement within our Organization.

Mr. Chairperson,

For the past six years, Ambassador Lenarcic has been steering ODIHR with dedication, goodwill and acumen. During his consecutive tenures, he has succeeded in further enhancing our Organization's capacity to monitor and assist participating States' implementation of their human dimension commitments, as well as in further bolstering civil society's capacity to act as watchdog. His shoes will not be easy to fill.

I would like to take this opportunity to salute Ambassador Lenarcic with all of our appreciation and wish him every success in his future endeavors.

Thank you.