

**Address by Grażyna Bernatowicz
Under-Secretary of State
at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland**

**Opening Session
of the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
(Warsaw, September 28, 2009)**

**Mister Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, Mr. Radosław Sikorski, I am pleased to welcome you to the 2009 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw.

I also wish to warmly welcome the Secretary General of the Organization, Mr. Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr. Miklos Haraszti, Ambassador Nikolaos Kalantzianos representing the Chairperson - in - Office of the OSCE and the Secretary of State, prof. Władysław Bartoszewski.

The HDIM is a gathering of exceptional significance: not only a platform for dialog between representatives of the participating states, but also a forum open to the civil society and NGOs. Poland, as the proud host of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, feels privileged to receive again a conference of this importance. In 2009 it has a special dimension, since this year we are marking the 20th anniversary of the political transformation in Poland, when a semi-democratic parliamentary election led to the establishment of the first non-communist government in Central and Eastern Europe and started a process that opened the way for democratic changes in this part of Europe and the reunification of the continent.

The Human Dimension Implementation Meeting is unique. On the one hand, it provides an excellent opportunity to discuss a wide range of issues relating to human

rights and democracy. We can analyze the existing shortcomings, emerging challenges and prospects for the implementation of human dimension commitments of the participating states. On the other hand, it allows us to benefit from the presence of representatives of the civil society and NGOs. Their participation in the meeting, on equal footing, enriches our deliberations and allows us to look at the trends in the OSCE areas of interest from a different angle. I am delighted that so many NGO people will be participating in the conference.

The HDIM remains crucially important as the fulfillment of human rights and democratic standards is still far from satisfactory. Practically every day we witness examples of violation of the values of an open, pluralistic and democratic society. It is particularly worrying that human rights defenders and the free media find themselves under increasing pressure. I am therefore glad that one of the special sessions will be devoted to the very important issue of the freedom of expression.

Similarly, hate-motivated incidents and intolerance continue to give cause for serious concern. That is why the implementation of commitments undertaken voluntarily by the participating states should be in the center of our discussions.

Furthermore, the global economic crisis we are facing now is overshadowing such issues as civil freedoms and human dignity. We need to remember this worrying tendency in our debate at the conference and during our efforts to promote human rights and implement international standards, especially since it is the national and religious minorities that are among the first to suffer the consequences of economic hardship. With this in mind we should prevent economic problems from being exploited to justify intolerance, discrimination or lack of understanding for others.

A broader reference to the human dimension in the architecture of European security is only natural when opening a major conference like the HDIM. It is good that the third basket has been incorporated in the Corfu process. This demonstrates that the respect for human rights and democracy is the best guarantee of preserving and

consolidating national and international security. By addressing all three OSCE dimensions in our debate on the future of European security, we can define the role of each one of them. In that context, this year's meeting on the human dimension is of particular importance: it provides an opportunity for a comprehensive debate, with due note to NGO opinions, on the implementation of third-dimension commitments, constituting a significant contribution to the discussions in the framework of the Corfu process.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, let me praise the activity of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Its role in promoting human rights, democratic standards and the rule of law can hardly be overrated. We recognize the ODIHR as a key asset of the OSCE, allowing an ongoing analysis and improvement of the observance of human rights in the Euroatlantic area.

I wish to thank Ambassador Lenarcic and his staff for their tireless efforts to assist states in fulfilling their human dimension commitments, in promoting the rule of law, tolerance and nondiscrimination and in building confidence between states and communities. Poland values the professionalism and objectivity that characterize ODIHR activities.

Also, thank for your engagement in organizing this year's meeting. I am confident that it will be marked by dynamic discussion, both fruitful and constructive, without avoiding tough problems.

It is my pleasure to invite you this evening to the traditional opening reception hosted by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Thank you for your attention.