



## **RIGHT OF REPLY STATEMENT BY TURKEY**

### **In response to the statement of the US delegation at Working Session 8 (Freedom of Assembly and Association) of the 2013 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**

**Warsaw, 27 September 2013**

Thank you Madam Moderator.

The US delegation referred to the recent events in Taksim Square. Let me begin by reaffirming that peaceful assemblies are an indispensable way of life in any democratically governed country. They are one among many ways of voicing dissent with government policy and of displaying a democratic reaction.

Excessive use of force by police was recognized at the highest levels of the Turkish Government, by the President, the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister as well as the Minister of Interior. Acting Prime Minister Arınç publicly apologized on June 4<sup>th</sup> to the demonstrators who were injured, stating that their original protest had been “just and legitimate”. The Ministry of Interior has subsequently launched a large number of administrative and legal investigations in over a dozen provinces, and complaints filed by private citizens against police officers are also being taken up with due diligence. As a consequence, over 160 police officers and 32 police chiefs are currently under investigation. There should be no doubt about how seriously the relevant Turkish authorities are treating the allegations.

At the same time, it should be remembered that the initial peaceful protests in Taksim square were quickly hijacked by marginal elements. This led to serious violations of public order and also resulted in large amounts of damage to both public and private property, estimated to incur costs in the tens of millions of dollars. This violence inevitably led to clashes with the police. The Turkish police reacted in a manner not dissimilar to what we witnessed in recent instances in other participating States.

Thank you.