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Remarks to the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Working Session 11

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The right of women to freedom of peaceful assembly and association

It is an honor to represent the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly at this forum.

I would like to emphasize that the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association should be enjoyed equally by all and highlight the importance of creating the appropriate conditions for women to be able to exercise this right.

The 62nd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women addressed the empowerment of rural women and girls. Here, there was a plethora of women's voices from all over the world. However, some voices are not being heard.

To obtain their own voice, women need opportunities to organize themselves in civil society. Such opportunities must be created through legislation and effectively implemented to bring about change and ensure that women enjoy these rights in practice.

Women's rights and fundamental freedom are as inviolable as men's. Women are independent by virtue of being human. In many countries this independence is suppressed through traditions that allow forced marriages. They do not receive schooling, cannot own property but only have rights through a male relative.

In many societies, women protest against such oppression and organize themselves in civil society. In many cases, they are subjected to a range of attacks, from degrading and hateful comments in the media to severe domestic violence as a response to raising their voice.

Women's freedom of expression and fundamental rights should not be restricted by culture, religion, unfair laws or unfair politics.

In our OSCE context, it is therefore important to actively seek cooperation with NGOs that organize women with an independent voice.

The OSCE must encourage the right of women to organize by allowing women's organizations to become natural partners in the OSCE's work in all three dimensions.

In this context I would like to draw attention to the resolutions of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly stressing the importance of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in a number of areas, in particular in conflict prevention and post conflict rehabilitation, and urging the OSCE to incorporate women's and gender perspectives in its work.

Thank you once again to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the OSCE Chairmanship for convening this important event.