



Statement by H.E. Mr. Nikola Zurovac
Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia to the Republic of Poland
at the opening plenary session of the 2019 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
16 September 2019

At the outset, we would like to express our appreciation to the Slovak Chairmanship for its dedicated efforts to convene this year's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights for its preparation and our Polish hosts for their hospitality.

As one of the largest annual human rights forums, the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting presents a valuable platform for an open dialogue between participating States and civil society representatives on the key challenges we are facing in implementation of our human dimension commitments, which have a clear impact on the security in the OSCE area.

In the Astana Commemorative Declaration, the OSCE participating States confirmed that the inherent dignity of an individual is at the core of comprehensive security, that human rights and fundamental freedoms are inalienable, and that their protection and promotion is our first responsibility. It is our duty to safeguard, strengthen and promote the human rights standards and norms that we all agreed upon.

Fundamental human rights and freedoms are most affected in times of conflicts and crises. Consequently, it is necessary to invest all possible efforts to find peaceful and sustainable solutions for existing and growing challenges, rebuild trust and confidence within the entire OSCE region and reconfirm our dedication to promote and respect human dimension commitments.

Let me also highlight the important role of the OSCE institutions in assisting participating States in addressing challenges and implementing their human dimension

commitments. Their work is one of the cornerstones of the OSCE human dimension and their respective mandates and capacities should be fully utilized, thus contributing to foster peace and security. In these challenging times, when threats to security are largely present in the entire OSCE region, only strong, independent and professional institutions can help us to properly address issues and accumulated problems. Taking into account divergent views on the work of some OSCE institutions, we have to work jointly in order to overcome divisions and mistrust.

Over the years, Serbia has benefited from close cooperation with all OSCE institutions. We appreciate the synergy between them and we recognize and respect the valuable assistance they have provided us in addressing challenges in areas such as the rule of law, freedom of expression and freedom of the media, including protection of journalists, protection of rights of persons belonging to national minorities, as well as rights of refugees and IDPs, democratisation and improvement of electoral processes, tolerance and non discrimination and freedom of assembly and association, all of which have been high on the agenda of the Serbian government in previous years.

Furthermore, we consider that strengthening links with civil society and promotion of its active involvement would contribute to further implementation of OSCE commitments in the third dimension. Their participation in the OSCE events, alongside the representatives of the participating States, is of great value. Therefore, we encourage all Participating states to have a constructive debate on relevant OSCE modalities of participation of civil society representatives to the OSCE activities, and particularly to human dimension events, in order to achieve concrete results and to improve the effectiveness of the Organization.

Finally, we would like to call upon all participants at this meeting to contribute to a fruitful dialogue and provide concrete recommendations and we look forward to a constructive spirit and productive debates during these two weeks.

Thank you.