
Chairmanship: Austria**1159th PLENARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

1. Date: Thursday, 5 October 2017

Opened: 10.10 a.m.

Suspended: 1 p.m.

Resumed: 3.05 p.m.

Closed: 5.55 p.m.

2. Chairperson: Ambassador C. Koja
Ambassador K. Kögeler

Prior to taking up the agenda, the Chairperson welcomed the new Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the OSCE, H.E. Ambassador Idibek Kalandar.

On behalf of the Permanent Council, the Chairperson also offered condolences to Canada, France, the United States of America and Turkey in connection with recent attacks in those States. The United States of America and Canada thanked the Chairperson for his expressions of sympathy.

3. Subjects discussed – Statements – Decisions/documents adopted:

Agenda item 1: REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE FOR
DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS
(ODIHR) ON THE HUMAN DIMENSION
IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

Chairperson, Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Estonia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro; and the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina) (PC.DEL/1281/17), Russian Federation (Annex 1), Switzerland (PC.DEL/1254/17 OSCE+), Turkey (PC.DEL/1291/17 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/1250/17), Kazakhstan, Norway (PC.DEL/1289/17), Canada (Annex 2), Georgia (PC.DEL/1282/17 OSCE+), Armenia, Ukraine (PC.DEL/1270/17), Azerbaijan (PC.DEL/1259/17 OSCE+), Holy See (PC.DEL/1257/17 OSCE+),

Tajikistan (Annex 3), Kyrgyzstan (PC.DEL/1278/17 OSCE+), San Marino, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Turkmenistan, Estonia-European Union (PC.DEL/1283/17), Poland

Agenda item 2: PRESENTATION BY THE OSCE SECRETARY GENERAL
OF THE 2018 UNIFIED BUDGET PROPOSAL

Chairperson, Secretary General (SEC.GAL/136/17 OSCE+), Estonia-Netherlands (also on behalf of the European Union Member States and with the candidate countries Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Andorra and Moldova, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1285/17), United States of America (PC.DEL/1251/17), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/1255/17 OSCE+), Turkey (PC.DEL/1265/17 OSCE+), Switzerland (PC.DEL/1253/17 OSCE+), Kazakhstan (PC.DEL/1295/17 OSCE+), Norway (PC.DEL/1292/17), Canada (PC.DEL/1297/17 OSCE+), Armenia, Azerbaijan (PC.DEL/1261/17 OSCE+), Kyrgyzstan (PC.DEL/1279/17 OSCE+), France (PC.DEL/1252/17 OSCE+)

Agenda item 3: REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE CONFLICT
PREVENTION CENTRE

Chairperson, Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre (SEC.GAL/132/17 OSCE+), Estonia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Andorra, Georgia, Moldova and San Marino, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1284/17), United States of America (PC.DEL/1256/17), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/1258/17), Turkey (PC.DEL/1290/17 OSCE+), Switzerland (PC.DEL/1294/17 OSCE+), Georgia (PC.DEL/1286/17 OSCE+), Armenia, Azerbaijan (PC.DEL/1262/17 OSCE+), Canada

Agenda item 4: REVIEW OF CURRENT ISSUES

- (a) *Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea:* Ukraine (PC.DEL/1271/17), Estonia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1287/17), United States of America (PC.DEL/1260/17), Turkey (PC.DEL/1276/17 OSCE+), Switzerland (PC.DEL/1296/17 OSCE+), Canada (PC.DEL/1300/17 OSCE+)
- (b) *Situation in Ukraine and the need to implement the Minsk agreements:* Russian Federation (PC.DEL/1268/17), Ukraine

- (c) *Concerns about reported police abuse of gay and transgender people in Azerbaijan*: United States of America (PC.DEL/1267/17), Canada (PC.DEL/1298/17 OSCE+), Azerbaijan (PC.DEL/1263/17 OSCE+), France
- (d) *Freedom of peaceful assembly in the Russian Federation*: Estonia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association country Norway, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Canada, Georgia and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1288/17), United States of America (PC.DEL/1266/17), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/1272/17 OSCE+)

Agenda item 5: REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE

- (a) *Preparations for the Twenty-Fourth Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, to be held in Vienna on 7 and 8 December 2017 (MC.GAL/1/17 OSCE+)*: Chairperson
- (b) *Continuation of consultations concerning an expansion of the Office of the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference*: Chairperson

Agenda item 6: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

- (a) *Announcement of the distribution of a written report of the Secretary General (SEC.GAL/138/17 OSCE+)*: Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities
- (b) *Participation of the Secretary General in the Slovak Security Forum, held in Bratislava on 2 October 2017, and his meeting with the President and a number of high-level representatives of Slovakia*: Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (SEC.GAL/138/17 OSCE+)

Agenda item 7: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (a) *Farewell to the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the OSCE, Ambassador M. da Graça Mira Gomes*: Chairperson, Dean of the Permanent Council (Liechtenstein), Portugal
- (b) *Democracy and rule of law in Spain*: Spain (Annex 4)
- (c) *Meeting of the OSCE Group of Friends of Mediation, to be held on 9 October 2017*: Switzerland (also on behalf of Finland and Turkey) (PC.DEL/1299/17 OSCE+)

- (d) *Successful completion of the Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games, held in Ashgabat from 17 to 27 September 2017, and the Joint Statement of Turkmenistan and Brazil “On Encouraging the Valuable Contribution of the Olympic Teams of Refugees to the Promotion of Peace and Human Rights”, adopted on 15 September 2017 at the 36th session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva: Turkmenistan*
- (e) *Results of the international conference “Islam in a Modern Secular State”, held in Bishkek on 28 and 29 September 2017: Kyrgyzstan (PC.DEL/1280/17 OSCE+)*

4. Next meeting:

Thursday, 12 October 2017, at 10 a.m., in the Neuer Saal



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1159

5 October 2017

Annex 1

ENGLISH

Original: RUSSIAN

1159th Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1159, Agenda item 1

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

Mr. Chairperson,

We thank the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, for her report on the results of the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM). We should like to urge you, Madam Director, and all our colleagues to engage in an honest and open discussion of the state of affairs in this area.

Our Organization is facing serious challenges – combating racism, ultranationalism and neo-Nazism, protecting national and linguistic minorities, countering anti-Semitism and intolerance against Christians and Muslims, solving migration problems, defending the rights of children and persons with disabilities, preventing violence against women, ensuring freedom of the media and conditions for the work of journalists, eradicating trafficking in human beings, and many others.

It is therefore necessary to resolutely counter the attempts at falsifying the history of the Second World War and to combat the glorification of Nazism and its adherents, marches by Waffen SS veterans, the glorification of criminal groups like the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, and manifestations of neo-Nazism, radical nationalism and other aggressive ideologies. The “war” unleashed in a number of OSCE participating States against monuments to Soviet liberator soldiers, which blatantly fuels neo-Nazi and xenophobic sentiments there, confirms the grounds for existing concerns in this context.

Journalists encounter major challenges in the OSCE area – they are stigmatized, accused of aggressive propaganda, labelled and expelled. Media workers are victims of harassment, threats and attacks.

Work to counter anti-Semitism and intolerance and discrimination against Christians and Muslims remains relevant. It should be comprehensive and balanced across all three dimensions. We believe it is vital to implement the Basel Ministerial Council decision and to adopt declarations on combating intolerance and discrimination against Christians and Muslims. We reaffirm our readiness to discuss a “working definition” of anti-Semitism in

co-operation with the United Nations and other organizations, academic circles and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). However, such discussions need to be conducted while simultaneously working on the definitions of intolerance against Christians and Muslims.

In view of the use of migration flows by international terrorist organizations to enter Europe, the migration problem is of particular significance in the context of ensuring human rights and security in the OSCE area. We recall that the root cause of these problems in Europe were the irresponsible actions of certain countries aimed at overthrowing undesirable governments in the Middle East and North Africa. In this regard, we believe that calls for burden sharing and collective responsibility in this context are completely inappropriate.

The question of bringing the ODIHR's election observation methodology into line with the principles of professionalism and objectivity is still topical, as is the drafting of a document in this area with the agreement of all participating States.

Dialogue is required to resolve these and other issues. However, we see that not everyone is ready for this. For many years now, discussions on the most important problems during the HDIM in Warsaw have been characterized by acute politicization. Despite some positive developments achieved thanks to the efforts of the Austrian Chairmanship, this year was no exception. Even now, colleagues from the European Union have been unable to refrain from making politicized statements. They will obviously also follow from a number of other Western countries and their allies. Do you call this constructive dialogue?

We are once again obliged to note the stubborn unwillingness of the Western countries to abandon their futile attempts at imposing their point of view on the entire human rights spectrum. We have repeatedly emphasized the importance of excluding the practice of double standards and the imposing of a unilateral model of democracy. This can lead to tragic consequences, as we have seen for ourselves from the example of the internal armed conflict in Ukraine.

Another example of overt bias is the report published recently by the ODIHR on protection of human rights defenders. Once again, we can see for ourselves the politicized nature of the approaches taken by the new leadership of the Office. We emphasize the inadmissibility of using non-consensus language, which goes far beyond the mandate of this OSCE executive structure. Such things will not remain without consequences.

I should now like to turn to the methods for the holding of the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. By no means all of the ODIHR's innovations deserve support. For example, the provision of unlimited time to invited speakers significantly restricts the opportunities for official delegations and representatives of civil society to exchange views. A graphic example was the panel discussion organized at the opening of the HDIM. As a result, the time for statements by delegations was reduced, even in the exercise of the right to reply. The organizers have evidently forgotten the original purpose of the HDIM, which is to review the implementation of commitments.

Despite the large number of participants registered at the HDIM, the level of representation of delegations falls from year to year. This time, three countries were forced not to participate in the HDIM at all. This is an alarming trend, requiring immediate action.

Attempts at reorienting previously agreed themes with the help of the annotated agenda of the HDIM are cause for concern. This happened, in particular, with the specially selected theme of social and economic rights, when emphasis was placed on the link between this category of rights and radicalization, extremism and terrorism. As a result, the discussion veered off topic, and the moderator even interrupted some speakers. We stress the importance of the annotated agenda being prepared in consultation with the participating States.

We regard as disgraceful the practice of our Ukrainian colleagues who attempted to drown out the free voices of the Crimean community – representatives of the national minorities of Crimea, by interrupting speakers “on a point of order”. The Human Dimension Implementation Meeting is not the place to discuss territorial affiliation, especially given that, in the case of Crimea, this question has already been resolved once and for all – the peninsula is an integral part of the Russian Federation. It is significant that the Western colleagues who usually advocate the unhindered participation of civil society institutions in the HDIM on this occasion actually joined the hullabaloo created by the Ukrainian delegation.

We should also like to draw attention to the scandalous situation that arose regarding the participation in the HDIM of the Chairperson of the Union of Journalists of Crimea, Andrey Trofimov. After his speech, he was approached and threatened by unknown participants in the HDIM, who kept their name badges hidden. We can guess which country these delegates were from.

We consider this to be absolutely unacceptable. We regularly hear from Western colleagues and the OSCE executive structures that the harassment of representatives of civil society is inadmissible. And now there is a direct threat to a representative of the media right at the largest regional human rights event. Where are the indignant voices of the representatives of the “developed democracies”?

Many people should be aware of this incident, since Mr. Trofimov mentioned it in his statement. As far as we are aware, he also informed the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Harlem Désir, who took the information into consideration, but the matter was not pursued further.

We call on the Director of the ODIHR, Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Harlem Désir, to express their unequivocal attitude not only to this outrageous episode but also to the situation in general when direct threats are made against members of the press during an OSCE event. What is this if not an attack on freedom of the media and a direct violation of OSCE principles and commitments?

There has long been a need for serious reform of the OSCE’s human dimension events, first and foremost the HDIM. If we wish to increase the authority and relevance of this forum, we should give serious thought to optimizing its working methods, duration, thematic focus and streamlining the participation of NGOs. We need to find an acceptable time-limit for the holding of working sessions so that statements by delegations, restricted to one minute, do not turn the very idea of the HDIM into a sham.

We call on the Austrian and future Italian OSCE Chairmanships to work on the possibility of resuming the discussions on this matter. We hope that the ODIHR will draw lessons from the negative experience of the HDIM.

We request that this statement be appended to the journal of the day.

Thank you for your attention.



1159th Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1159, Agenda item 1

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF CANADA

Mr. Chairperson,

We would like to thank Director Gísladóttir for her report on the recently concluded Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, and take this opportunity to also thank Poland for the gracious hospitality we were extended while in Warsaw. As regards our impressions of the meeting, I would like to emphasize four points:

Firstly, our experience in September reinforces our view that HDIM continues to play a critically important role as a venue for civil society and OSCE delegations. As did the Director, we welcomed the increased attendance from civil society at HDIM, as well as the number and quality of the excellent side events hosted by both civil society organizations and OSCE delegations. The meeting once again demonstrated the value of having a unique forum where participating States can review the implementation of our joint OSCE commitments in conjunction with members of civil society, whether present as individuals or larger organizations. At HDIM, civil society is able to voice its concerns and offer constructive criticism and recommendations for areas where participating States can improve. We were glad to see States engaging constructively with civil society both in the plenary hall and at side events, and believe that it proved valuable to the majority of participants.

Secondly, we noted the growing presence of GONGOs which appear to be sponsored by some participating States. This is unfortunate, as not only do they take valuable time away from credible civil society organizations, but they undermine the intended objectives of the States that deploy them. The use of GONGOs to attack other States achieves the opposite of the intended result, as it discredits the very criticisms that could potentially be raised by legitimate NGOs or other participating States. The transparent use of GONGOs reflects poorly on their State sponsors, and diminishes the impact of the views of those sponsors. Given this, we believe that States making use of GONGOs are acting against their own best interests.

Thirdly, we are deeply troubled by the reports of intimidation and threats against HDIM participants and members of their families. Any participating State that utilizes or condones such actions is violating their OSCE commitments and international obligations. No participating State is above reproach as regards its implementation of these commitments, and we believe it is incumbent on participating States to listen and respond to criticism in an open manner and not to silence voices through coercive means.

Fourthly, the events in Warsaw have reaffirmed our view that HDIM is a uniquely open forum, and must remain so. We believe that the free exchange of views is a necessary pillar of any democratic society, and can be helpful in easing tensions and finding solutions to grievances, HDIM provides us with the opportunity to respond to criticism, defend our positions, or clarify our concerns when confronted with views we dispute, do not want to hear, or believe to be illegitimate. Indeed, our delegation was concerned by the number of intolerant and discriminatory interventions that were delivered at HDIM. Hate-mongering must be unequivocally countered by all participating States wherever it is raised, including at HDIM. However, despite the fact that the views expressed contradicted the OSCE commitments made by all participating States, we recognize that these speakers had a right to express themselves. Their co-ordinated appearance at HDIM further reinforces our belief that it is crucial that we, as participating States, speak out in unison against such views, as inclusion and respect for diversity represent the right and only rational approach for democratic States. We were glad to see many participating States using their right of reply to forcefully reject expressions of intolerance, and also note that these responses were much appreciated by many civil society organizations at the meeting.

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to express Canada's profound thanks to ODIHR and to Director Gísladóttir for having hosted a dynamic and rewarding HDIM this year. We look forward to actively engaging in upcoming ODIHR events in 2017/18, which we see as the core of the OSCE's human dimension efforts which contribute to preserving peace and security throughout the region. We look forward to working constructively with other participating States to ensure that HDIM continues to be an open and effective forum in which to address our shared OSCE commitments and other international obligations.

In closing, I would ask that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.



1159th Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1159, Agenda item 1

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF TAJIKISTAN

Mr. Chairperson,

The delegation of the Republic of Tajikistan joins the previous speakers in welcoming the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, to the meeting of the Permanent Council, and thanks her for her presentation of the results of the recent OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting.

We have repeatedly drawn the attention of the Permanent Council, OSCE Chairmanships, the ODIHR and the OSCE Secretariat to the illegal activities of representatives of the so-called Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) and other groups, which were banned by the Supreme Court of Tajikistan in September 2015 after their failed attempt at a coup d'état. This year we have also reiterated our request that the registration and participation in the HDIM of persons who have perpetrated serious crimes and acts of terrorism should not be allowed. We, as an OSCE participating State, have requested that criminals should not be allowed to turn the HDIM into a political show and use the meeting for promoting unacceptable and hostile ideas and goals.

Unfortunately, our warnings and objections have not been taken into account. On the contrary, by ignoring the request of a participating State, the ODIHR provided a large number of terrorist elements, criminals and unidentified persons a good opportunity to participate in the meeting and, moreover, to organize a series of side events in order to deliver hate speeches and make open calls for the violent overthrow of the Government of Tajikistan.

In previous years the official delegations of Tajikistan actively participated in the HDIMs, engaging in useful and constructive dialogue with NGOs and civil society groups. Tajikistan has constantly undertaken concrete steps to fulfil its international obligations on human rights protection, ensuring the active participation of political movements and parties, civil society and the mass media in the political life of the country. At present, 2,589 non-governmental organizations and seven different political parties are registered and function freely in Tajikistan.

This year, for the first time, the Government of Tajikistan decided not to participate at the HDIM, both because of last year's bitter experience and also because of the inadmissible registration of criminal elements for participation in this year's meeting.

We believe that such a disparaging attitude towards the concerns of a participating State damages confidence, deepens mutual distrust, and undermines efforts to establish mutually respectful co-operation and dialogue within the OSCE.

We also believe that the ODIHR should meet the expectations of the OSCE participating States. Therefore, especially at this time, we consider it necessary to continue discussions concerning changes in the modalities of ODIHR events, including the HDIM.

We call on the OSCE Austrian Chairmanship and the incoming Italian Chairmanship to promote improvement in the practice of good relations between the participating States and this OSCE institution, in order to avoid a further crisis in the Organization.

Mr. Chairperson, I request that this statement be included in the journal of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.



1159th Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1159, Agenda item 7(b)

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF SPAIN

Mr. Chairperson,

Last week, I reported at your request on the situation regarding democracy and the rule of law in Spain. I am taking the floor again to draw attention to the latest developments in my country provoked by the separatist challenge of the Government of Catalonia, a challenge to the Constitution, the Statute of Autonomy and Spanish democracy. The continued breakdown of the rule of law has led to a very serious and growing social divide and upheaval.

The Independence Referendum Act and the Act on the Legal Transition and Founding of the Republic, adopted by the Catalan Parliament on 6 and 7 September 2017, violated the most fundamental parliamentary and democratic norms. They were adopted against the advice of the Parliament's legal services and were declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court. With complete disregard for any judicial decision, the Government of Catalonia has continued to breach and violate the Constitution, laws and mandates and court rulings; and has continued with a plan in which the so-called "referendum" of 1 October 2017 signifies a break with the democratic rule of law.

On 1 October, we witnessed an act of disobedience and contempt for the judicial authority triggered by the institutions that represent the State in Catalonia. The legitimacy of Catalan autonomous institutions emanates from the Spanish Constitution of 1978, a pact of coexistence among all Spaniards that was voted for by more than 90 per cent of Catalan citizens in an irreproachable referendum.

In recent months, these authorities have violated the principles that have sustained democracy and the peaceful coexistence among Spaniards for 40 years, and have exacerbated the feelings that lead to exclusionary and radicalized nationalist attitudes, bordering on xenophobia. On the opposite side are hundreds of thousands of Catalan citizens who do not want the breakdown of Catalan society or the severance of Catalonia's centuries-long ties with the rest of Spain as a distinct part of the same political community. The Spanish democrats are faced with the challenge of defending democracy, the Constitution and laws, and of countering the social and political rupture provoked in Catalonia.

Mr. Chairperson,

There is a deceptive game currently being played that pits perception against reality in order to spread confusion. Under the pretext of invoking democracy, we are witnessing a mockery of democratic principles. The Venice Commission twice warned that the “referendum” planned for 1 October did not meet the Commission’s criteria, because it was contrary to the Constitution and laws. The Catalan Government ignored this opinion and went ahead with its intention. That irresponsible attitude is at the origin of the events of 1 October.

Allow me to draw attention to some incidents that should not go unnoticed and that occurred on that day of voting. I am referring to the absence of an electoral roll, of scrutineers and to the printing of ballots by the voters themselves. There is documented evidence of multiple voting, ballot boxes being placed on streets and in private homes, and votes being counted in atypical places such as houses of worship. Opaque ballot boxes and ballot boxes pre-filled with ballot papers were used. On the evening of 1 October, the announcement of the first count by those responsible for the day showed that the turnout was 100.88 per cent. The so-called “referendum” has been characterized by an absolute lack of safeguards as a result of flagrant illegality. We looked on in embarrassment at a travesty designed to obtain a single possible result, a crude alibi for the unilateral proclamation of secession.

Mr. Chairperson,

I am going to refer to another perception on which we should reflect, that of the “repressive State”. The scenes of violence on 1 October have grabbed the media’s attention and obscured the underlying realities: a blatant violation of the rule of law, a serious attack on the general interest and violations of the fundamental rights and freedoms of millions of citizens.

First, I should like to emphasize that the security forces have acted in defence of our constitutional order. They have done so by order of the court in order to prevent the holding of the referendum, and have fulfilled their duty in a context of great hostility.

Spaniards, having learned the lessons of history, reject violent actions. The necessary condition for social peace is respect for democratic law. To the extent that abuses or excesses have occurred in the use of force, the rule of law will act through the courts in response to complaints. We have every confidence in the rule of law. Allow me to remind you that Spain is the country with the least number of convictions per capita in the European Court of Human Rights.

Second, I should like to emphasize that the actions of the State security forces have not been indiscriminate, nor in any way premeditated, as some believe. The actions of the security forces were aimed at confiscating material destined for the perpetration of an act declared illegal by the courts. In order to comply with this court order, the eviction of spaces that had been occupied in order to prevent compliance with those orders was inevitable.

Third, and in the face of what some have called “brutal repression” on 1 October, claiming figures of more than 800 injured, it seems necessary to emphasize that, according to verified data, the number of people hospitalized has been four: two with minor injuries, who

were discharged on 2 October; and a person of 70 years who suffered a cardiac arrest and a person with more serious injuries, both of whom remain in hospital.

In contrast, not so much has been said about and not as many images have been circulated of the numerous attacks carried out on the security forces or the wounded civil guards and police officers (more than 30). It is important to highlight the harassment of police officers, journalists, politicians and private citizens who did not support the illegal referendum. These acts of violence and harassment persist and include acts that may be characterized as hate crimes and constitute serious abuses of fundamental rights.

Mr. Chairperson,

I should also like to refer to the concerns voiced by various groups about the alleged restriction of rights, particularly of expression and assembly. No general or indiscriminate measures have been adopted. Measures taken by court order, also in the area of fundamental rights and freedoms, have been exceptional and directly linked to the prevention of illegal actions related to the holding of the referendum. There have been no arrests of journalists, no intervention in the work of the media, no censorship of information, which has been sufficiently evidenced by the broad media coverage of the day.

Neither has there been any restriction of the rights to assembly and demonstration. The actions of groups of people in clear violation of court orders, or acts of resistance to authority in order to prevent the execution of these orders, cannot be confused with the exercise of the right to assembly. Moreover, Spain has already responded positively to the request for a visit, which was addressed to us on 27 September 2017 by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association. Since 1991, Spain has maintained an open and permanent invitation to all United Nations rapporteurs and independent experts to visit our country in the fulfilment of their mandates. To date, we have no pending acceptance of any request that has been submitted to us through the United Nations system.

Furthermore, I should like to emphasize that one of the measures of concern is the use, processing and dissemination of personal data of millions of Catalan citizens (addresses, telephone numbers and identity documents), in what could constitute a massive violation of the fundamental right to the protection of personal data.

In my statement last week, I referred to the disinformation and manipulation that have surrounded the recent events in Catalonia. These actions have continued and increased. Many fake photographs have been circulated and images from past events have been used to illustrate the incidents of 1 October. I appeal to the prudence and good sense of all when making judgements based on such images about an open and welcoming country that has been visited by more than 70 million people in recent years and that some now want to present as being subject to a repressive and hostile regime.

Mr. Chairperson,

The announcement by the President of Catalonia of a forthcoming unilateral declaration of independence is a very serious matter and cause for grave concern. The Government of Catalonia intends to carry out a coup against democracy, culminating in an

insurrection. Democratic institutions have the duty and responsibility to respond in a calm and firm manner to this claim. Today, as it has been in the past, the Government of Spain is ready for dialogue, but in order for this to take place, we must return to the democratic rule of law, constitutional loyalty and the restoration of public order. Harassment and persecution against the forces of law and order and threats and warnings to citizens who are not pro-independence must cease.

On Tuesday 3 October, His Majesty the King, Don Felipe VI, addressed the Spanish citizens in his capacity as Head of State in these difficult and complex times. He reminded us that our democratic principles are strong and solid. And they are, because they are based on the desire of millions of Spaniards to live together in peace and freedom. The Head of State expressed the desire and the conviction that on this path to a better Spain, to which we all aspire, Catalonia will also be with us.

Mr. Chairperson,

In this Organization, which promotes rules-based security, we know that by weakening the rule of law, we put security at risk. I am therefore grateful for the recent statements in defence of democracy and the rule of law in Spain. Your support is crucial. Rest assured that Spain's democratic institutions have as their guiding principle coexistence in peace, freedom and democracy among all Spaniards whose rights and freedoms are covered by the 1978 Constitution.

Mr. Chairperson, I request that this statement be appended to the journal of the day.

Thank you very much.