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STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF ODIHR

Delivered by Ambassador Anne- Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 16 December 2021

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you, Mdm. Chair,

And let me also thank you for ably chairing this Council in 2021.

I would also like to thank Director Mecacci both for his report here today, and for his engaged participation in the Human Dimension Committee meeting this week. I have highly appreciated the cooperation with ODIHR throughout this year as Chair of the HDC. We look forward to further dialogue with the Director and his colleagues in 2022. Let me of course also congratulate ODIHR with the 30th anniversary.

ODIHR's mission is very simple. We, the participating States, established it to assist us in ensuring full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, democratic principles, and other human dimension commitments. As part of this mandate, ODIHR is to monitor our compliance with these commitments. ODIHR is to implement its mandate autonomously under the Director's leadership.

The relevance of the mandate of ODIHR is clearly shown during the ongoing pandemic, where for example tolerance, rule of law and essential elements of democracy are challenged. As an institution common to all participating States, ODIHR can assist us in situations like this in ensuring that our counter measures uphold human rights, democratic principles, and the rule of law.

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Equally important for building trust in a society is the freedom to hold peaceful assemblies. ODIHR has monitored assemblies in Finland, the United Kingdom, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Netherlands and Portugal this year. We hope to see even more such activity in the coming years.

Mdm Chair, colleagues,

In this year's last Human Dimension Committee meeting, held two days ago, we discussed how to ensure public confidence in election processes. When citizens have confidence in the execution of elections, the process contributes to security, good governance and development in a society.

One observation from our meeting was that an important element in building confidence is independent observation, and also that consequent recommendations are available to the public in a transparent manner. We have heard today that ODIHR deployed observer missions to 19 elections this year. The Needs Assessment Missions also give valuable information about the situation in the assessed country. ODIHR's comprehensive, needs-based, consistent, and systematic methodology for election observation ensures credibility and high-quality recommendations to the participating States in a transparent manner.

To those states that want ODIHR to observe elections in a broader range of states, I would like to add that we agree. The only way to make sure that ODIHR can implement more election observations in all parts of the OSCE region is a robust budget for this purpose over the Unified Budget. Insisting on a reduction of the resources of ODIHR only aims to confirm the claim that ODIHR's work is geographically unbalanced. To maintain ODIHR's expertise, independence, and impartiality, we as participating States bear the responsibility collectively to provide ODIHR with sufficient resources to fulfill its mandate.

ODIHR is an instrument of implementation only of what the states have agreed. While we disagree about much in this Permanent Council, we must not let those disagreements influence the efforts of ODIHR to implement what we have managed to agree to by consensus.

Thank you