

Opening statement
by Mr. Andrii Deshchytsia
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine
to the Republic of Poland,
Deputy Head of the Delegation of Ukraine
at the
HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
(21 September 2015, 10:00-13:00)
Hotel Sofitel Victoria, Warsaw

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The delegation of Ukraine joins previous speakers in expressing gratitude to the OSCE Chairmanship and the ODIHR for their efforts in organizing the 2015 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. We also thank the Polish government for its hospitality.

Distinguished participants,

Regretfully, for the second consecutive year this Meeting takes place at a particularly challenging time, when there is a need to strengthen the comprehensive response to the grave threats to security and human rights in Europe, caused by the Russian military aggression against Ukraine.

Russia's illegal occupation of Crimea and on-going aggression in Donbas clearly demonstrate that violation of international law by one participating State causes serious damage to democratic stability and peace in the whole Europe and beyond.

The very foundation of this Organization has been effectively undermined as the Russian Federation grossly violated 10 founding principles of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975.

It is a matter of regret that instead of marking the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Decalogue of principles by advancing towards the vision of the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community, we have again to confront the threats of past times, where aggressive wars are possible and international obligations and treaties may be worth nothing.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As a result of Russian aggression 7% of Ukrainian territory is temporarily not controlled by the Government, thousands of killed, over a million of internally displaced people and regional infrastructure destroyed. According to the UN estimations, a total of at least 7,962 people have been killed, and at least 17,811 injured in Donbas since mid-April 2014.

Ukraine welcomes and supports the important role of the OSCE and its autonomous Institutions as part of international efforts aimed at assisting Ukraine's Government in addressing Russian aggression against Ukraine. We highly value the role of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, set up upon request of the Government of Ukraine, in contributing to defusing tensions and fostering peace, stability and security.

The situation with human rights in the occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and in uncontrolled territories of Donbas is critical. International human rights monitoring missions, UN, OSCE and the Council of Europe report systematic violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the affected regions.

Murders, tortures, harassment, illegal detentions, enforced disappearances, persecution of journalists, human rights defenders and activists are among the most widespread human rights violations in the affected regions.

The crimes committed by the occupying authorities and Russia-backed militants so far remain without due investigation as Ukrainian authorities do not have access to these territories.

In order to make sure that justice is served Ukraine recognized the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court on crimes against humanity and war crimes committed since the beginning of the Russian aggression. The ICC jurisdiction will cover the abovementioned crimes regardless of the nationality of persons, suspected in their commission.

We welcome the recent Report of the ODIHR/HCNM Human Rights Assessment Mission on Crimea, undertaken upon the request of the Ukrainian Government in July 2015, which documented numerous credible, consistent and compelling accounts of human rights violations in Crimea under the Russia's illegal occupation and thereby substantiated the negative developments on the peninsula since its attempted annexation by Russia in 2014.

Independent findings testify that the indigenous population of Crimean Tatars has been subjected to constant terror. The occupying authorities seek to eradicate all manifestations of the Ukrainian identity, education and culture. In reality, the other side of dire situation is the deliberate policy of forced russification, pursued by the occupying authorities.

The monitoring of the media situation in Ukraine by the Representative on Freedom of the Media reaffirmed that the Russian aggression against Ukraine has led to the crackdown on media freedom in the illegally occupied Crimea and in certain areas of Donbas, which are not under control of the Ukrainian Government.

Violence against independent journalists, dissemination of the Russian state propaganda by the Russian media on the territory of Ukraine, as well as defiance of norms of journalistic ethics and falsifications by the Russian media reporting on the situation in Ukraine are the main elements of this dire landscape, severely undermining the OSCE principles and commitments. We are convinced that more efforts should be done within the OSCE to counter propaganda as propaganda results in sharp curtailing of the freedom of speech.

We emphasize that all responsibility for human rights violations in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea rests with Russia as the occupying authority in accordance with the international law. The same applies to responsibility for human rights on the territories of certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions over which the Russian Federation exercises control.

It is critical to continue close and permanent monitoring of the human rights situation in Crimea and provide a strong reaction to unacceptable cases of serious human rights violations. We reiterate the need for the OSCE Institutions' visits to the occupied Crimea, which should be undertaken in line with the UN GA Resolution 68/262 "Territorial Integrity of Ukraine" of 27 March 2014.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Delegation of Ukraine reiterates its resolute protest against the on-going unlawful actions of the Russian Federation towards Nadiya Savchenko, Oleg Sentsov, Oleksandr Kolchenko and other Ukrainian citizens, who had been abducted from the territory of Ukraine and illegally detained by the Russian authorities on trumped-up charges. These citizens are political prisoners in Russia. Russia's actions towards those Ukrainian citizens and their criminal prosecutions are illegal and illegitimate as they constitute a flagrant violation of norms of international law and the Minsk agreements.

We welcome that at its Annual Session in Helsinki the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly adopted the Resolution "On Abducted and Illegally Detained Ukrainian Citizens in the Russian Federation", calling on the Russian Federation to immediately release all Ukrainians - political prisoners in Russia.

The forthcoming Ministerial Council Meeting in Belgrade will offer an opportunity to participating States to commit themselves to eradicate the phenomenon of political prisoners in the OSCE area.

Dear colleagues,

In spite of the ongoing military aggression from a neighboring state, Ukraine stays committed to the chosen course of profound transformations that will consolidate democracy, good-governance, rule of law and protection of human rights in the country in line with the OSCE commitments and other international standards.

The ongoing reform process in Ukraine is of comprehensive nature and encompasses numerous areas, in particular the constitutional reform, including decentralization, reforms in the judiciary and public service, good-governance and anti-corruption, security sector and police reform, to name a few.

We welcome the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine commitment to assist the Government of Ukraine in advancing its reform agenda, transparently and accountably, through facilitating wide-ranging dialogues with stakeholders in pursuance of legislative reforms, promoting human rights approach and cooperative efforts between the government and the civil society. We strongly support the projects on National Dialogue in Ukraine as another important tool of the OSCE assistance in fostering social cohesion and dialogue in Ukraine.

In August 2015 the President of Ukraine approved by his Decree the National Human Rights Strategy aimed at establishing effective mechanisms for protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedom in the country. Ukraine looks forward to drawing from the OSCE expertise in developing the respective Action Plan and implementing the Strategy until 2020.

We take this opportunity to reaffirm Ukraine's support for the ODIHR, RFoM and HCNM in assisting OSCE participating States in the implementation of their human dimension commitments by providing expertise and practical support within their respective mandates.

As we approach the regular local elections in Ukraine (except certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, as well as temporary occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol) scheduled for 25 October 2015, and the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission commenced its activities in Kyiv on 9 September, let me reiterate that the Ukrainian authorities are committed to holding free, fair and democratic elections in accordance with the national legislation and OSCE commitments.

Distinguished colleagues,

We are confident that the OSCE must continue to spearhead its efforts towards protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms in light of current grave challenges to human dignity and security in the OSCE region, resulting from Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

Settlement of a crisis requires urgent, robust and most importantly joint efforts. Effective response will depend upon our readiness to safeguard the principles and commitments, elaborated within the OSCE since 1975, and to seek their full implementation.

The Human Dimension Implementation Meeting remains the main instrument for the effective monitoring of compliance with the human dimension commitments, including through the unique involvement of civil society, and is one of the fundamental pillars of our cooperation.

We hope that the discussion at the HDIM will contribute to stimulating Russia's return to the tenets of international law and its good-faith implementation of the OSCE human dimension commitments, which stay at the core of our collective security.

Thank you for your attention.