



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT BY NORWAY

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile to the 2013 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, Warsaw 23 September, 2013 – Opening Session

Thank you, Mr Chairman,

Let me join previous speakers in thanking the Polish government for hosting this Human Dimension Implementation Meeting as well as the Chairmanship and ODIHR for their solid preparations.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the new High Commissioner on National Minorities, Ms Astrid Thors, to her first Human Dimension Meeting. We look forward to cooperating with her and her office.

The statement made by the representative of the EU reflects views that have the support also of my government. In this statement I will therefore limit myself to highlighting some of Norway's priorities.

Mr Chairman,

My government considers the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting an important forum. It gives us an opportunity to look concretely at how we are all fulfilling our Human Dimension commitments.

The exchange of views with the NGOs is a defining characteristic of this meeting. Any effort to reform HDIM must respect the key role of civil society in building strong democracies. Many NGOs have access to sources of information we as government representatives can never reach. They have expertise, experience and, not least, enthusiasm for their work. Many also show considerable courage in their daily efforts to expose injustice and hold governments to account. All governments should accept the work of the NGOs and ensure their safety, even when, or in particular when, they look into the dark corners of our own societies.

Mr Chairman,

Freedom of expression is under pressure in several OSCE participating states. This is of great concern because freedom of expression and freedom of the media are truly fundamental rights. Being free to express opinions and criticise violations of human rights is not only an end in itself. It is a condition for the full enjoyment of other rights, as freedom of assembly and freedom of religion and belief. Freedom of expression is critical for ensuring democratic development and broad participation in decision-making, thereby contributing to enhanced stability and security.

Mr Chairman,

New technologies and social media have provided new opportunities for individuals and groups to make themselves heard. Unfortunately this is in some countries countered by efforts to monitor, censor and block these expressions. This is a matter of concern to my government.

Mr Chairman,

All agenda items for HDIM are of interest to my government. During the coming two weeks we will in particular contribute to our discussions on the following topics:

First, national minorities. Because Norway has national minorities that have suffered discrimination in the past and because we want to share with you lessons learned in our efforts to rectify past injustice.

Second, prevention of violence against women and children. Because this global disgrace represents a grave violation of basic human rights and human dignity.

Third, freedom of expression, free media and information. Because there must be no doubt that this freedom exists online as well as offline.

Fourth, abolition of capital punishment. Because it is inhumane and cruel. It does not even serve as a deterrent to crime.

Fifth, tolerance and non-discrimination. Because we want to underline that also LGBT persons must enjoy that same rights and the same protection as all others..

Mr Chairman,

We regard this HDIM as an important part of our preparations for the Kiev Ministerial Meeting. In Kiev we hope we can agree on third dimension decisions along the lines proposed by the Ukrainian chairmanship. This should be achievable if we all agree on a balanced approach.

Thank you, Mr Chairman