

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Exactly one year ago I addressed you here, during the last year's OSCE human dimension meeting and spoke about numerous infringements of the rights of journalists and total lack of freedom of speech and right for free distribution of the information in one of the states-participants of OSCE - Turkmenistan.

All this time, the whole year, OSCE tried to establish a dialogue with the government of the lifelong president Saparmurat Niyazov. All this time the OSCE Center in Ashkhabad continued to function.

What has changed since then? Is it possible to say, that the situation in Turkmenistan has improved even a bit? No! The Situation has only worsened and now looks like a real disaster.

First, the country's authorities continued regular persecutions of correspondents of Radio Liberty, using physical violence to force them to stop their professional activity.

Then the last officially accredited foreign journalist, the staff correspondent of the Russian news agency ITAR-TASS Anna Kurbanova has been expelled from Turkmenistan.

The ex-ambassador of Turkmenistan to OSCE, whom you perfectly know, Mr. Vladimir Kadyrov who was present here exactly one year ago, has been recalled to Ashkhabad and what happened to him afterwards is not known. I urge you, ladies and gentlemen to show some interest in his destiny, maybe someone of you will manage to get any information about him.

There is still no information on whereabouts and a state of health of the other ex-head of the mission of Turkmenistan to OSCE Batyr Berdyev and also former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan Boris Shihmuradov and other political prisoners in Turkmenistan.

At last, let me mention the recent so-called "espionage scandal" in Turkmenistan as a result of which a group of French TV reporters, two diplomats accredited in Turkmenistan and several citizens of Turkmenistan have been accused by local authorities of espionage, sabotage and antistate activity.

The final was tragic: the citizen of Turkmenistan, free-lance correspondent of Radio Liberty Ogulsapar Muradova has been tortured to death in custody.

The Republican Party of Turkmenistan which I represent here agrees that dialogue with Niyazov is necessary for the OSCE to have at least some opportunity to influence processes in the country which in fact is completely isolated from the rest of the world.

However, we categorically disagree that dialogue with Niyazov should be conducted in a form convenient to him, and according to the rules convenient to him, because these rules do not consider the rights and interests of the free person and do not make provisions for carrying out any democratic reforms at all.

If OSCE on a regular basis turns a blind eye to severe infringements of the obligations endorsed by Turkmenistan, including those regarding guaranteeing of freedom of mass-media;

... if repressive regime of Saparmurat Niyazov dictates the OSCE conditions on which it will agree to be reminded about the principles of the Final Helsinki Act and constantly blackmailing OSCE, threatening to refuse the membership in this organization,

... the effectiveness of such an organization gives rise to some serious doubts, and what's more important – the people living in Turkmenistan will lose their last faith in justice and hope for the worthy life.

Thank you for your attention, ladies and gentlemen. See you next year.

I hope that in the meantime Niyazov wouldn't kill too many people.