



Statement by Austrian OSCE Chairmanship 2017

delivered by Ambassador Florian Raunig, Head of Task Force

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2017

15 September 2017

As we are coming to a close of the first week of this year's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, I would like to say a few words in my capacity as head of the Taskforce of the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship.

Over the last 5 days we have covered a wide range of issues in the human dimension of the OSCE. We started the week off with our high-level panel discussion on "key issues that threaten the human dimension in the OSCE region, where we heard a number of recommendations on how the OSCE could, and should, respond to preserve and promote human rights overall, and as an integral part of our security agenda. That afternoon, and over the following few days, we discussed issues ranging from freedom of the media and freedom of expression, to freedom of assembly and association, national human rights institutions, the role of civil society, democracy and democratic elections, equal participation in political and public life, freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief, and finally a number of topics under the broad title of tolerance and non-discrimination.

In all these sessions we observed vibrant discussions and sobering insights into the overall human rights situation across the OSCE region. Here I would recall one of the key messages that echoed across the halls throughout these days:

All of us, governments, international organisations, civil society – or generally, all people – need to come together, to jointly guarantee that our universal human rights are protected, and enjoyed! For each and everyone us!

It would be remiss, however, if I do not mention here that we have also heard some statements in the last day or two in particular, which were not aimed to preserve our OSCE principles and unanimously adopted commitments on human rights and fundamental freedoms. To this, I would say that we should all uphold the principles of tolerance and show respect and understanding for one another.

Since the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, the OSCE participating States have adopted a wealth of commitments in the area of human rights over the years. We must preserve them, if we want to live in peaceful, harmonious, safe, and secure societies.

With that message, we hope to see the vibrant and lively discussions in the second week continue with positive messages on how we can move forward and improve the implementation of our human rights commitments across the OSCE region.

Finally, on behalf of the Chairmanship, and I hope I can also speak on behalf of all participants here, in conveying our sincerest gratitude to the ODIHR Director and her entire staff who have worked tirelessly to make sure this meeting can take place in a respectful and meaningful manner. A special thank you to all of the introducers and to the moderators, for their very able and objective steering of the sessions. This was not always an easy task.

Thank you also to the Rapporteurs, note takers, and interpreters working behind the scenes!

And finally, thank you to all of you, especially civil society representatives for coming to Warsaw and pushing us to uphold our commitments.