



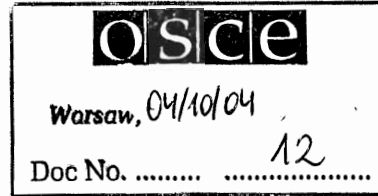
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## The Netherlands Presidency of the European Union

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### Statement by the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union Opening Plenary Session Monday, 4 October 2004

Mr. Chairman,

It is a great pleasure to address, on behalf of the European Union, this opening session of the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, the most important meeting in the field of the human dimension in the OSCE.

Let me start by thanking the ODIHR for organising this meeting in the professional manner we have in the course of the years become accustomed to. Let me also thank the Chairman-in-Office for the important input in the preparation of this meeting. And let me -last but not least- thank our Polish hosts who are now receiving the HDIM for the ninth time in the city of Warsaw with the warm hospitality this country is known for.

Since the first HDIM took place in 1993 it has become a habit to state in the opening speech that this is the most important meeting in its kind in the OSCE. Participating States and others assembled here could hardly be expected to say otherwise. But the importance of the HDIM is of course in the first place the reflection of what we, the participants, make of it. In the course of the years, the modalities of the HDIM have undergone a number of changes. But without the active and constructive participation of us all, no meeting of the HDIM could be a success. The European Union has come to Warsaw with the intention to contribute actively, in a positive

manner and with an open mind to this ninth HDIM. We hope and expect that this will be met by a similar attitude of the other participants.

At this first session of the 2004 HDIM, the European Union will make some points on how we approach this meeting, what we will do during this meeting and what - speaking generally- we hope or expect to be its outcome.

It is difficult to measure the success of a meeting like the HDIM in concrete terms. When human rights are adhered to, when governments and peoples let themselves be guided by tolerance and non-discrimination, when freedom of speech, assembly and religion are guaranteed and elections are conducted in a free and fair manner, this will still not be proof that this is the case because of the relevant OSCE commitments, let alone because of the HDIM taking place.

On the other hand, keeping silent when OSCE commitments in the field of the human dimension are wilfully violated would be not only a mistake, but itself a violation of our commitments. It has often been recalled, that the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and that they do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned. Indeed, this has been one of the important achievements of the OSCE process. Therefore, the European Union will at this meeting leave no doubt about its views on the implementation of OSCE commitments - but it will not criticise just for the sake of it.

Implementation, as perceived when this HDIM was instituted, is a broad concept. It means more than just discussing cases where performance -at least in the view of some- falls short of what is desirable. It can never be the intention to turn the HDIM into some kind of a tribunal. It equally means discussion of positive developments, where and when these are relevant for other participating States. And it implies the readiness to discuss the threats to human rights posed by recent developments as widespread terrorism and the dilemma's facing us as a result of this.

Apart from discussing the implementation of commitments, the HDIM -not entitled to draft a consensus document- also has the right to submit recommendations to the OSCE. We note that this has in recent years turned into a habit, and to such an

extent as to have become self-defeating. The compilation of recommendations has resulted in an unwieldy document of over ninety pages, which will for that simple reason not receive the attention it deserves.

The European Union intends to reverse this trend, which in its view is non-productive and counter-productive. We will therefore make only recommendations that are both concrete and practical and which we intend to follow up in the months and years to come. We hope that this approach will be followed generally and will contribute to making the HDIM a tool of the OSCE and not just an event.

The importance of the HDIM goes beyond the formal working sessions. The HDIM provides us also with an important framework for interaction between participating States, international organisations and NGO's for a frank and constructive dialogue. To make the HDIM truly a success, the informal meetings, the side-events and the discussions in the margins are therefore equally important. The EU wishes to state at this opening session its readiness to enter into dialogue with all participants in the two weeks to come, in order to make the best use of this meeting.

The European Union has taken note of the suggestion made by the Chairman-in-Office in his opening statement at this HDIM, to relocate this meeting. While a case can certainly be made for having OSCE events rotate among different participating States, serious thought should also be given to the practical and financial consequences of such a decision. The European Union is of the opinion that a decision on this issue can only be taken after weighing the advantages and disadvantages and after ascertaining the added value in terms of substance, format and participation in the HDIM.

Mr. Chairman,

The work of the OSCE in the field of the human dimension does not stand on its own. In the defense of human rights, the OSCE, the ODIHR, the United Nations and its various bodies, the Council of Europe and also the European Union -now with twenty-five member countries- all have a role to play and the HDIM forms part of our comprehensive human rights policy. The European Union welcomes the fact that this issue of co-operation between international organisations will receive special attention during this year's HDIM.

At the same time, it should be noted that, within the broader context of the defense of human rights, the OSCE has in the past more than once given proof of its ability, by its very nature as a consensus organisation, to act as a catalyst in cases where a positive development had for some time been slow in coming.

We will have to bear both these elements in mind when considering the outcome of this HDIM: we will have to avoid duplication, we will have to consider the most effective ways to achieve our goals and we will have to recognise the strong points of all actors in the field of the human dimension. If we do so, this HDIM may well prove to yield results which go far beyond these two weeks in Warsaw and will have an impact on the human rights situation in the OSCE area as a whole.

The Candidate Countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia<sup>1</sup> align themselves with this statement.

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Thank you.

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