



PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

OPENING STATEMENT BY THE AMBASSADOR OF NORWAY
H.E. GUTTORM VIK

Warsaw, 28 September 2009

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by joining previous speakers in expressing our gratitude to the Polish government for its hospitality and warm welcome to Warsaw. Our thanks also go to ODIHR and the Greek Chairmanship for all their painstaking preparations, and to our panelists and introductory speakers.

The HDIM goes to the very heart of what makes the OSCE unique, namely the comprehensive concept of security, encompassing the military, economic and human dimensions, with a strong emphasis on respect for human rights as the basis for genuine security. All participating States are equally bound by our commitments in the Human Dimension, such as respect for human rights and the rights of minorities, the rule of law and good governance, including the observance of electoral standards, freedom of the media, gender equality and a vibrant civil society. We must do our utmost to uphold and develop them across the OSCE region.

Unfortunately, **Mr. Chairman**, in some participating States we still see breaches of agreed commitments, such as elections that fail to meet international standards, and journalists, lawyers and other human rights activists who are being threatened, beaten up or even murdered, without the perpetrators being brought to justice.

When adherence to recognised commitments is lacking or inadequate, independent institutions like the ODIHR, the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the High Commissioner on National Minorities, have vital roles to play in making well- founded assessments of the situation and in offering practical assistance to remedy shortcomings. Norway is therefore convinced that our institutions must preserve their autonomy and that participating States should take full advantage of the assistance they offer. Let me stress that we all have something to learn from our watchdogs, our discussions and our peer reviews.

Mr. Chairman,

The annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting is the forum of the NGOs. Norway welcomes the broad NGO participation, and we salute their hard work in promoting human rights and democracy across the OSCE region. We must recognise that NGOs are indispensable contributors to our partnership-based peer review and continue to give them access to our meetings and conferences, in line with established practice. We are therefore pleased to see that this year's meeting has devoted a whole day to the freedom of expression and freedom of the media, an area so central to human rights defenders and journalists. This is also a fitting tribute to our outgoing Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr. Miklos Haraszti, for all his untiring and courageous efforts.

Since last year's meeting, the brutal murders of Stanislav Markelov, Anastasiya Barbuova, Natalia Estemirova, Zarema Sadulaeva and Alik Dzhabrailov have in a tragic way reminded us of the dangers facing human rights defenders and independent journalists in parts of our region. The right to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression are among the cornerstones of democratic societies and must be treated as such in the national legislation and judicial rulings.

Mr. Chairman,

The work carried out by the institution of High Commissioner on National Minorities in protecting and defusing potential conflict situations related to minority issues across our region is of great value. Norway would in particular like to commend the institution for the efforts laid down in compiling and developing a set of Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations. We firmly believe that these recommendations will be of great importance in the promotion of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and in improving trust and cooperation between the States belonging to this organisation.

We are happy to see the continued emphasis on the rule of law. In real democracies power must not go uncontrolled and unchecked. The independence of the judiciary is a key element in providing the necessary control, and without it, justice cannot be impartial. Independent courts guarantee the protection of the rights of the citizens and the rule of law is a vital precondition for a proper democracy.

Let me emphasise that the rule of law is also one of the most important preconditions for a sound and sustainable economic development in a country, to the benefit of all its people.

Finally, Mr. Chairman,

My delegation looks forward to a frank discussion during the coming days, motivated by our shared responsibility to uphold the dignity and human rights of the individual, as we seek to match deeds with the lofty commitments we have made as OSCE signatories.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman