

Statement of Mr Guðni Bragason, Permanent Representative of Iceland at the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2018.

Madam Chair,

I like to thank our Polish hosts for their hospitality, and ODIHR and the Italian Chairmanship for organizing this meeting. Needless to say, ODIHR enjoys the full support of Iceland.

On the seventieth anniversary of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, Iceland remains fully committed to the promotion and protection of human rights, both at home and abroad. Iceland's commitment is integrated into all areas of our foreign policy and development cooperation, as well as in bilateral and multilateral relations, including at the UN, the OSCE, the Council of Europe.

The protection of human rights is an essential part of the work of the OSCE. In that context it is important to have in mind that there is a clear interaction between human rights, peace and security and economic development.

This summer Iceland took a seat in the UN **Human Rights Council** for the first time. In our commitments for the candidature we stated that human rights are universal and concern everyone, everywhere. They are an integral part of international relations and, although their promotion and protection are the primary responsibility of States, they are not the private matter of each State. Allow me to mention few issues of importance for us in this context.

Gender equality has for long been a priority issue for Iceland. In promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, Iceland has focused on women's participation in decision-making, combating discrimination and violence against women, and respect for sexual and reproductive health and rights. Gender equality is also at the core of Iceland's strategy to promote the women and peace and security agenda, based on the Security Council resolution 1325. A special focus has been on engaging men and boys and their crucial role in achieving gender equality.

We support initiatives aimed at eliminating all forms of violence against **children**, in particular sexual exploitation and abuse and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage. It is necessary to secure the best interests of the child in justice systems, while ensuring the principle of due

process, and promote multi-agency and child-friendly approaches to child protective services.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. This means everyone, irrespective of their gender, sexual orientation or gender identity. Iceland has, along with other rights, also put the human rights of **LGBTI individuals** in the foreground of the membership of the Human Rights Council ,and in other multilateral cooperation. It a key issue for our Government, as the Icelandic Foreign Minister has stated.

We strive to support **civil society** organizations, maintaining a constant dialogue with them on human rights issues and challenges. This includes open consultation processes on proposed legislation and the preparation of submissions to the human rights treaty bodies.

We call for a better **education for human rights** and democracy, based on critical thinking and reflection on the basic values of society.

Iceland has **ratified** all major international conventions and agreements on human rights and encourages other States to do the same, and advocates for the full implementation of such conventions and agreements.

Finally,

Iceland is devoted to the implementation of the **2030 Agenda** for Sustainable Development. Respect for the rule of law and for human rights is embedded in that Agenda.

Thank you, Madam Chair.