



STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE
2018 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Opening plenary session
Monday, 10 September 2018

Madam Chair,

The Holy See is pleased to take part in this 2018 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, and thanks Poland, our host country, for its hospitality, as well as the Italian OSCE Chairmanship and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, for planning and organizing this meeting.

Ever since the negotiations that led to the Helsinki Final Act, the Holy See has placed special emphasis on the human dimension of the OSCE, convinced that security, safety and peace are brought about not by restricting human rights, but rather by guaranteeing their enjoyment by all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. Therefore, the Holy See considers the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting a central component of the OSCE structure, as it allows all 57 participating States not only to take stock, but also to confirm our common course towards a region second to none in its respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Holy See, however, has to note with regret that, after three Ministerial Council meetings – in Belgrade (2015), in Hamburg (2016) and in Vienna (2017) – which passed without consensus on any Ministerial Council decision or declaration in the human dimension, the participating States were unable to reach consensus on the agenda of this HDIM.

While a number of factors have contributed to this state of affairs, discussions during the past few years have clearly demonstrated that participating States hold diverging and at times contradictory positions concerning human dimension issues. This applies not only to specific issues, but also to the very understanding of our consensually agreed upon commitments related to universal human rights and fundamental freedoms.

This reality is openly – and sometimes painfully – on display during the human dimension events, where all Delegations and civil society organizations express a desire for the increased protection and advancement of human rights and fundamental freedoms, but often end up in unhelpful mutual accusations based on highly selective approaches to human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Our failure to recognize this state of affairs, and adequately deal with it, can turn these last years from being an unfortunate occurrence, to a lasting reality in the OSCE.

My Delegation believes that a new impetus is needed, based on the fact that We the States of our Organization form a community not only of values, but also of responsibility, not just for the common good of the OSCE area, but also for the day-to-day work within the Organization.

The solution is obvious: The 57 OSCE participating States need to unite around a common understanding of OSCE commitments in the “third basket”, as well as on the universal principles of human rights and fundamental freedoms that underpin the human dimension.

The lack of such a shared understanding – reflecting a common view or approach – has consequences for security and co-operation among States. Pope Francis noted this when he pointed out that “particularly in the wake of the social upheaval of the 1960’s, the interpretation of some rights has progressively changed, with the inclusion of a number of ‘new rights’ that not infrequently conflict with one another. This has not always helped the promotion of friendly relations between nations, since debatable notions of human rights have been advanced that are at odds with the culture of many countries; the latter feel that they are not respected in their social and cultural traditions, and instead neglected with regard to the real needs they have to face. Somewhat paradoxically, there is a risk that, in the very name of human rights, we will see the rise of modern forms of *ideological colonization* by the stronger and the wealthier, to the detriment of the poorer and the most vulnerable. At the same time, it should be recalled that the traditions of individual peoples cannot be invoked as a pretext for disregarding the due respect for the fundamental rights proclaimed by the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*”.¹

In conclusion, while wishing all organizers and participants at this 2018 HDIM fruitful discussions and assuring everyone of the Holy See’s constructive engagement during the next two weeks, my Delegation hopes that these few considerations will be helpful in our common work.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

¹ Pope Francis, Address to the members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, 8 January 2018.