

## **OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING 2018**

### **UNITED KINGDOM STATEMENT AT OPENING SESSION**

Madam Chair, Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentleman,

I fully subscribe to the statement made on behalf of the member states of the European Union, but would like to add a few words in my personal capacity as I approach the end of my second, and final, year as Chair of the OSCE Human Dimension Committee.

Madam Chair, above all I want to say how pleased I am to be here.

Diplomatic delegations, and ODIHR, have focused in recent days on questions about the organisation of this conference.

I express sincere thanks and admiration to the Italian Chairmanship for making this event happen and to you Madam Chair and your staff for putting arrangements for this complex event in place. It has not been straightforward, but is very welcome that we are meeting here today.

Madam Chair, as Chair of the Human Dimension Committee, with my highly dedicated team I work to keep human rights and fundamental freedoms high on the OSCE agenda.

OSCE participating states face new and evolving challenges in implementing our shared commitments including, but not only, challenges related to technological change. That is why I attach so much importance to Human Dimension Committee discussions being topical, inclusive and relevant to everyday lives across the OSCE region.

Our 57 States, supported by the experience and institutions of the OSCE, including ODIHR, and informed by extensive dialogue with civil society, have unequalled potential to guide our region towards a future of cooperation and security based on shared principles and commitments.

We have unique potential to learn together and learn from each other for the benefit of all. HDIM is an important opportunity for learning, for increasing mutual understanding and reducing the mistrust that can lead to intolerance, discrimination and conflict.

HDIM is also a chance to put the international spotlight upon human rights abuse, upon pressures on fundamental freedoms, human rights defenders, integrity of democratic processes, and space for civil society, and on the human consequences of state actions that violate international law and the rules based international order.

2018, a year of important anniversaries, some already referred to this morning, is a good time to remind ourselves that sustainable security is indivisible from respect for rights and freedoms, and that intolerance and prejudice can have catastrophic consequences.

Madam Chair, in conclusion I recall that in 1990 in Copenhagen, states agreed that the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the development of society based upon pluralistic democracy and the rule of law were pre-requisites for a lasting order of peace, security, justice and cooperation in Europe.

That is why we are here today and why we need to protect and strengthen the OSCE Human Dimension.

When we speak of human rights we often speak of respect.

I look forward to two weeks of discussion conducted with respect for each other and for the OSCE principles and commitments that have brought us here today.

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