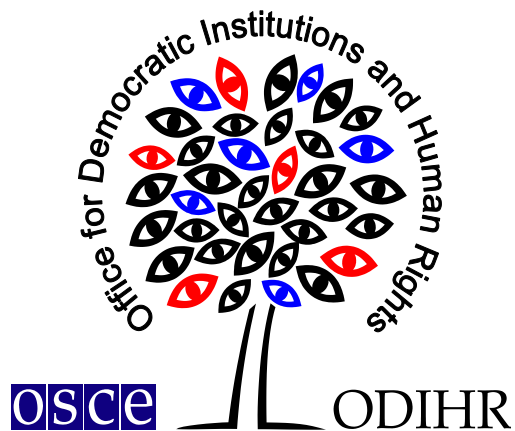


2011 HUMAN DIMENSION SEMINAR

THE ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS

18-20 May 2011

Novotel, Warsaw



Closing remarks by

Ambassador Janez Lenarčič

Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

Check against delivery!

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank our rapporteurs for so comprehensively and accurately capturing our discussions over the last few days. I am very pleased with the level and tenor of debates during this seminar. Allow me to offer a few closing reflections.

We have been able to discuss, in this Seminar, issues that lie at the very heart of the human dimension. We have been able to explore and debate the fundamental role that political parties play in the democratic political process as envisaged by the OSCE commitments. We have, in particular, been reminded that the respect for, and protection of, political pluralism is key to the development of democratic processes and institutions.

In this seminar, our moderators and introducers have asked fundamental questions, such as:

- What are the key obstacles to the full implementation of OSCE commitments related to political parties and pluralism?
- How can political parties support and advance the full and equal participation of women and men in the political process?

- How can political pluralism and basic human rights be protected in the regulation of political parties?
- How can electronic tools and applications increase and deepen citizen participation and representation in democracy and its processes?

Many excellent answers and solid recommendations were heard. We took note of these and will make them available in the summary report of this meeting; we will analyze them and take them into account in our continuing assistance to participating States in these areas.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have been reminded, throughout this Seminar, of the diversity of legal and political cultures surrounding political parties in the OSCE area, and the different approaches that exist to tackle some of the issues that were raised. It is in such Seminars, such meetings, that we truly appreciate what the OSCE can offer us: an exchange of

experiences and insights that can help and support reform efforts in our participating States.

I have already mentioned that pluralism lies at the heart of our OSCE commitments on political parties. 20 years ago many of our participating States moved away from a single party state system, and there were high expectations of what multiparty democracy could deliver by way of development and pluralism.

Unfortunately, 20 years later and looking back on our original expectations, many promises have not been fulfilled. Political parties have not always pursued inclusive policies or maintained high levels of integrity. Moreover, there has not always been true representation of many segments of society.

The popular perception is often that narrow interest groups receive special treatment and are able to control political parties. Scandals surrounding political parties and their leaders have had a negative impact on the level of trust and confidence society places in democracy. Political parties need to rebuild their relations with voters in order to protect the pivotal role they have in democracy and preserve their function. Ensuring vibrant political parties is one of the major challenges to the foundation of multiparty democracy in the 21st century. Multiparty democracy, however, is only as good as its

individual parts and the extent to which transparency and accountability can be ensured.

Here at the Human Dimension Seminar, we were able to see a form of pluralism in action. The debate in this room was made richer and more interesting by the wide variety of participants, with different points of view, coming from NGOs, think tanks, academic institutions, but also parliaments, courts and other state bodies. I am particularly grateful for their practical recommendations and suggestions in our discussions.

Indeed, seeing such a broad and diverse group of participants, we were reminded that the rationale behind this seminar is to support and facilitate exchanges on issues in the human dimension between experts and practitioners. The more such experts are brought together by the participating States – the more successful human dimension seminars will be.

I therefore would like to express my gratitude to all those – participating States, OSCE Field Operations, and civil society organizations – that supported the participation of experts in this Seminar.

On a closing note, let me thank each and every participant for your contribution which made this Seminar a vibrant and vigorous discussion. I would like to extend special thanks to those participants who made it from the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation.

Thank you. I hereby declare this Human Dimension Seminar closed and wish all participants a safe return journey.