

Announcement of the Creation of a Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations on Ukraine's Chairmanship of the OSCE

We, representatives of non-governmental organizations from Ukraine and other OSCE states, as well as international civil society networks, announce the creation of an NGO Coalition on the Ukrainian Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2013. The goal of the coalition is to strengthen the role of civil society in all OSCE processes and to support Ukraine as the Chairman in Office in its efforts to increase the effectiveness of the OSCE and improve the implementation by all participating States of their OSCE obligations in the Human Dimension. The Coalition believes that Ukraine should use its chairmanship to improve the human rights situation and address real human dimension problems both at home and in the OSCE region as a whole.

In connection with Ukraine's 2013 chairmanship of the OSCE, the Coalition will take the following steps:

- Make recommendations for Ukraine's thematic priorities in the Human Dimension and for the reform of the OSCE's human dimension mechanisms;
- Prepare and propose methods for improving the implementation of Ukraine's own obligations in the Human Dimension;
- Assist in the preparation of the agenda and plans for OSCE events in the Human Dimension;
- Prepare recommendations for reaction to urgent and crisis situations that may arise in the Human Dimension within the OSCE area;
- Provide expert support for the preparation of documents by the Chairman in the Human Dimension; and
- Carry out civic monitoring of the activities of the Chairman in Office and the work of OSCE institutions during Ukraine's chairmanship and publish our observations.

The Coalition recommends that the Ukrainian chairmanship include in its list of thematic priorities in the Human Dimension resolution of problems in the following areas:

- Realizing the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of associations;
- Implementing the right to fair trial;
- Protecting human rights defenders and consolidating existing international norms and standards in this sphere with the goal of preparing guiding principles for the protection of human rights defenders and the further strengthening of these norms in the form of new OSCE obligations and
- Ensuring freedom from torture and cruel and inhuman treatment through the development of national preventative mechanisms including requiring participation by NGOs in their activities.

We call on the Ukrainian government to follow the example of the Irish chairmanship by organizing active discussions of means for improving the effectiveness of Human Dimension events, broadening the role of civil society in the OSCE and strengthening the OSCE's independent institutions. We highly regard the Irish chairmanship's openness to and willingness to hold a substantive dialogue with civil society. The Coalition recommends that the Ukrainian chairmanship continues work on increasing the effectiveness of the OSCE's activities in the Human Dimension in the following directions:

- Strengthening the role of the OSCE's independent institutions in the Organization, including the Bureau for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the High Commissioner for National Minorities, the Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Special Representative and Coordinator on Trafficking, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE;
- Creating the institution of Special Representative of the OSCE for Protecting Human Rights Defenders;
- Creating as a part of ODIHR and other OSCE institutions panels of independent experts on the most important Human Dimension issues similar to the existing expert panel on freedom of peaceful assembly. Their task should be to make proposals and recommendations for standards in the Human

Dimension, as well as for guiding principles and recommendations in the area of best practices for implementing participating States' Human Dimension obligations;

- Institution of a procedure for preliminary analysis of how well countries seeking the chairmanship are meeting their OSCE obligations and the preparation of recommendations for improvements during the period before they assume the chairmanship. At first, this procedure should be voluntarily requested by future candidates for the chairmanship;
- Increasing the role of civil society institutions in the activity of the OSCE, including through regular representation of NGOs in the work of the Permanent Council, the Human Dimension Committee, the Council of Ministers, and sessions of the Parliamentary Assembly, as well as through the participation by NGO experts in the preparation and conduct of the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting and SHDMs, and in the preparation of reports and recommendations based on the outcomes of these meetings.

The coalition believes that the situation regarding the following Human Dimension issues in Ukraine are of the greatest concern and require substantive progress by the incoming Chairman in Office in the next few months leading up to the start of Ukraine's chairmanship:

- Violations of the right to a fair trial (including access to justice, the problem of judicial independence, and interference in judicial processes);
- Torture, cruel and inhuman treatment (including in prisons¹);
- Limitations on freedom of expression and freedom of the media;
- Limitations on the right to peaceful assembly; and
- Politically-motivated administrative and criminal persecution of civil society activists, journalists, and politicians;

This list is not all-inclusive, and does not include key issues, the resolution of which would have a significant effect on the overall human rights situation.

The Coalition also recommends that Ukraine officially request that ODIHR conduct a general evaluation of the legislative process in Ukraine with the goal of helping to improve its quality.

The Coalition and experts working with it are ready to provide support for the preparation and implementation of more detailed proposals related to any of the above-named issues. The coalition reserves the right to amend its recommendations as the situation develops through 2013.

We call on the Ukrainian authorities to engage in active dialogue with the Coalition and are ready to discuss a variety of forms of cooperation.

The Coalition is open to other NGOs that wish to join, and operates with the support of the international Civic Solidarity platform (<http://www.civicsolidarity.org>).

Warsaw, September 27, 2012

Signatories:

- The Ukrainian Helsinki Union for Human Rights
- The Association of Ukrainian Monitors of Human Rights and the Activities of Law Enforcement Agencies
- The Foundation for Regional Initiatives (Ukraine)
- The International Helsinki Association

¹ This includes social and medical facilities, facilities within the structure of the Interior Ministry, the penitentiary and migration services, the security service and the Ministry of Defense in which people are forcibly incarcerated on the order of a court or administrative body and which they may not leave on their own will without a ruling by the courts or the relevant authorities.

- The International Youth Human Rights Movement
- The International Civic Initiative for the OSCE
- HIAS Representative Office in Ukraine
- Civic Alternative (Ukraine)
- The Debate Academy (Ukraine)
- Human Rights Club (Azerbaijan)
- International Partnership for Human Rights (Belgium)
- Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Poland)
- Netherlands Helsinki Committee (Netherlands)
- Albanian Helsinki Committee (Albania)
- Centre for Development of Democracy and Human Rights (Russia)
- Freedom Files (Russia)