

**Address by Mr. Janusz Stańczyk,  
Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
ODIHR Seminar  
Warsaw, May 16-18 2007**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Polish authorities I am pleased to welcome you to the ODIHR seminar on “Effective Participation and Representation in Democratic Societies”.

I am honored by the opportunity to address the panel inaugurating the Seminar. Each year this Warsaw event brings together experts from OSCE states, international organizations and NGOs – that is people who consider the human dimension to be the backbone of the OSCE concept of security. Over three busy days you will be able to debate key issues concerning the involvement of citizens in political life, that is the actual influence of society on governance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Democracy is a system of government that guarantees respect for human rights, the rule of law, peace and security. No state has ever managed to build a stable and durable democratic system in a short period of time. It is a protracted process; it not only requires the creation of institutions but also an effective and open administration, ensuring communication between the citizens and government. This seminar will focus on the building such ties by enabling citizens to participate in political processes and ensuring their equal access to them. On the other hand, in addition to creating conditions for active participation, state institutions and NGOs should direct substantial efforts to

enhance the citizens' awareness of their rights and to encourage them to become active in political life.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The OSCE can be proud of its assistance to participating states in their fulfillment and strengthening of democratic values, both in domestic and international policy. The attainments and experience of the OSCE in this sphere constitute an unquestionable value as concerns the consolidation of security and stability, within the OSCE area and beyond.

A special role in the OSCE's work is played by the institution that has organized this meeting – the ODIHR. Poland highly values the work of the Warsaw Office for Democratic Institution and Human Rights – one of the premier instruments of the OSCE, providing essential help in the practical implementation of commitments and democratic values.

The experience and professionalism of the Office should be utilized in educational activity concerning the enhancement of participation and representation standards in democratic electoral processes, which are the guarantee of stable political systems. Preservation of the Office's autonomy is a precondition for maintaining its efficiency.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Examining the meeting agenda, I am confident that it will produce tangible and significant results. You will be able to exchange views on the chances and challenges of the civil society. I hope our guests will share their ample experience and expert knowledge. I am certain that the meeting will elaborate

many key recommendations that will be subsequently used to enhance a crucial area of the OSCE's human dimension – namely active participation and proper social representation in political life.

I wish you fruitful deliberations. A critical analysis of the issues on the agenda of this conference, with due reference to geographic and institutional aspects, will help us fulfill commitments undertaken in the framework of the Helsinki process. I am confident that the professionalism of the ODIHR Director, Ambassador Christian Strohal and his team, evidenced by the excellent organization of this event, will contribute to its success.

Let me take this opportunity to invite you, on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to a reception at 6 Foksal Street, 7 p.m. tonight.