

**OSCE Permanent Council**

***“OSCE and OHCHR: working together”***



**Statement by  
Ms. Navi Pillay  
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

**Vienna, 3 July 2014**

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to have this opportunity to address the OSCE Permanent Council, and to celebrate deeper cooperation between the OSCE and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Last month the former Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Janez Lenarčič, and I signed a joint declaration to define a framework for enhanced cooperation in the areas of promotion and protection of human rights, democracy, rule of law, elections, tolerance and non-discrimination and gender equality. OHCHR and ODIHR will cooperate in assisting Governments of the OSCE participating States to implement the recommendations of international human rights mechanisms and OSCE human dimension commitments.

Ambassador Lenarčič has been an inspiring partner and I want to bear tribute to his leadership of ODIHR during the past six years. We very much look forward to working with Michael Georg Link, whom I congratulate on his appointment.

The work of our two organisations is complementary. The cornerstone of the OSCE's work in its 57 participating States is security – whether politico-military; economic and environmental; or security in its human dimension. Societies can only be truly and sustainably secure when they respect human dignity, ensure social justice, and enable the realization of fundamental freedoms and human rights. OHCHR's mission is to work world-wide to promote and protect those fundamental freedoms and human rights, by empowering people to realize their rights and assisting States to ensure that they are upheld.

I am convinced that there are many ways in which our organisations can amplify each other's work with linked planning and activities. Our mandates are interrelated across multiple fields of

action. Good governance. Equitable access to economic, social and cultural resources. Prevention and resolution of conflicts. Gender equality. Tolerance and non-discrimination. Rights of minorities. The democratic space. The struggle against human trafficking. Ensuring respect for freedom of opinion and information. Accountable and equitable systems of justice to uphold the rule of law. All these and more are issues that we hold in common.

Today I would like to touch on several issues where I believe a sustained, joint effort by our organisations can heighten our positive impact on people's lives. I will also outline the various types of in-depth expertise that has been developed by the international human rights system to seek precise and lasting solutions. Finally, I will touch on existing cooperation between teams from OHCHR and the OSCE, in various geographic and thematic contexts, and suggest ways in which we can take this further.

## ***Key topics***

Efforts towards development can only be lasting and successful if they are built on sound and accountable governance; rule of law; and respect for all human rights, including the right to development. The countries of the OSCE span a broad range of political, economic and security systems but these concerns are paramount in all of them. Yet throughout the OSCE, millions of people continue to suffer from injustice, poverty, social exclusion, and numerous forms of discrimination. This denial of rights not only impacts their personal well-being but jeopardises peace and security both within and among States.

Only a constant focus on ***equality*** can ensure that the right to development is fully realised throughout society. We must make it a priority to end discrimination against women and against all minority groups, whether on the basis of race, religion, migrant status, ethnic origin, or sexual orientation.

I will be addressing in a separate speech today the vital importance of enabling a *free and critical press*. Sound, bold and independent journalism is an important tool to allow concerns to be aired, and thus enable them to be addressed. A dynamic *civil society* is another essential for good governance. In many countries, civil society activists face challenges of oppression, threats of violence, and overbearing surveillance. This effort to stifle criticism is counter-productive: civil society activists are key partners to foster dialogue and enhance participation by all. Widening the democratic space is a priority for my Office, and we look forward to working with ODIHR in this area.

*Corruption* also challenges good governance. It undermines democratic values and institutions, erodes the rule of law, encourages misuse of public goods and degrades the enjoyment of human rights, in particular economic and social rights and the right to development. I know that all the countries of the OSCE are engaged in a constant and principled struggle against corruption, and OHCHR stands ready to assist.

*Impunity* is another related, topic that requires our attention.

Populations recovering from conflict or authoritarian rule have a right to know that their painful experiences are acknowledged by the broader society, and that the perpetrators have been investigated and prosecuted. We must also ensure that all people – and especially the most vulnerable segments of society – have full access to justice.

Furthermore, there is a pressing need to integrate human rights more fully into *economic development*. The activities of businesses, and strategies for dealing with economic crisis and budget deficits, must take into account the human rights of all members of society.

Lastly, I want to emphasise my concern for *forgotten rights-holders*. All human beings have exactly the same right to dignity and equality, and this includes people who remain stigmatized, such as the Roma; people with intellectual or psycho-social disabilities, including elderly persons with cognitive problems, particularly those in segregated care institutions; migrants, including those of irregular

status; and also people living in disputed territories and suffering from protracted conflicts.

Let me move now to consider ways in which States can implement the solution-focused expertise that has been built up by the international human rights system.

### *Expertise of the international human rights system*

Since the call for the creation of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in this very city some twenty years ago, a flexible and interlocking structure has grown to assist States to comply with their human rights obligations under international law. The most complete and comprehensive overview of goals and gaps in human rights, rule of law and good governance at the national level can be found in the recommendations issued through this structure – in other words, by the UN human rights treaty monitoring bodies, the UN special procedures and the Universal Periodic Review of the UN Human Rights Council.



My Office attaches great importance to holistic follow-up of these recommendations at the national level, since we view all recommendations from the mechanisms as one coherent whole. To maximise practical impact, OHCHR advocates clustering and prioritising recommendations from all UN human rights mechanisms, with follow-up coordinated by one national mechanism steered at the highest level of the Government, with the involvement of all relevant actors – including line Ministries, state entities, regional and local authorities, the national human rights institution, and civil society. In several countries, OHCHR has provided support and assistance for the establishment of such senior-level mechanisms.

It is important that these clustered and prioritized recommendations from human rights mechanisms are reflected in a national action plan, which will contribute to the creation of a strong national human rights protection system and enhance national ownership of follow-up efforts. This national action plan for human rights can then serve as the basis for action by international and

regional actors, working hand in hand, with clear benchmarks, objectives, and timelines, so as to ensure impact and tangible results.

Such plans drive effective and coordinated support to State institutions by the UN system, regional organisations (such as the Council of Europe, the European Union and OSCE), and bilateral donors, cutting down sharply on the risk of duplication in terms of activities, planning and programming. In the future, I trust that development cooperation funds that ensure implementation of such plans will be better aligned and better leveraged.

### ***Cooperation with the OSCE***

My Office has grown into an operational and field-based organisation, with increased engagement in the context of crises and 67 human rights presences worldwide. Like the OSCE's field offices, these have enhanced our direct assistance to member States in multiple and crucial areas such as constitutional development,

legislative reforms, and stronger institutions, including justice systems. They also seek to introduce human rights into dialogue on a vast range of topics.

The good cooperation established between the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine and the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission is a strong example of how our organisations can act together, eliminating duplication and deploying limited resources in harmony towards a common goal. Our observations and recommendations are very similar, and I believe them to be mutually reinforcing.

In recent years there has been a wealth of cooperation between teams from OHCHR and the OSCE across a number of geographic and thematic contexts. They include national human rights institutions, minorities, the rights of Roma, human trafficking, and human rights education. Strong and practical cooperation has been established between our field presences in countries such as the

Republic of Moldova and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as well as in the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

We also collaborate on addressing human rights protection gaps in protracted conflicts, for example in the context of the Geneva International Discussions to resolve the consequences of the 2008 conflict in Georgia.

My Office has encouraged stronger cooperation between the OSCE and the UN human rights mechanisms, particularly the holders of Special Procedures mandates.

### *Concluding remarks*

Human rights violations are among the root causes of every form of insecurity and instability. Failure to ensure good governance, the equitable rule of law and inclusive social justice and development can trigger conflict, as well as economic, political and social turmoil. The specialized expert bodies of the international human rights system

have developed in-depth knowledge to offer precise, implementable and lasting solutions that can resolve many of those issues.

In the years to come — as we seek to ensure a more peaceful, democratic and secure world in the face of new political and economic challenges — we at OHCHR know that we can work best in a much closer partnership with the OSCE. When both our organisations are pulling in the same direction, we will not only cut down on wasteful parallel costs but give all our stakeholders better value, by making our work more effective. And above all, we will be enabling the people of the OSCE region to live lives that are safer and more peaceful, free from want and free from fear.

Thank you.