



Opening Statement
by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Dr Solomon Passy,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria,
at the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, 4 October 2004

Dear Mr. Cimoszewicz,
Ambassador Strohal,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am privileged to address this meeting - the largest gathering of politicians, diplomats, and civil society activists from the OSCE area devoted to what lies in the very heart of our organization: respect for democracy, rule of law and human rights.

Human rights protection became an area of substantive cooperation among the participating States and an essential norm of their relations. The OSCE has provided an institutional mechanism to hold signatory states publicly accountable for their human rights record. The Human Dimension Implementation Meeting is reconvened each year to reaffirm our commitments to this set of guiding principles and to consider the best possible ways to enhance their implementation.

I take advantage of this opportunity to thank the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights for organizing this Meeting over the years. I also like to thank Poland for its support for the OSCE by hosting both the ODIHR and the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting for already more than a decade now.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The agenda for this meeting covers the whole spectrum of our human dimension commitments. They all have relevance in our strife for a better world.

Some world events, however, have cast a dark shadow. No words can describe our horror and shock at the barbaric and despicable acts of terrorism in Madrid, recently Beslan and in other places. They all represent a brutal attack against the highest human value - our free life.

With the very start of the Bulgarian Chairmanship, we pledged to work hard on implementing the Maastricht documents, and among them, the Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty First Century. The plain truth remains that security has become a many-faced issue that dominates the debate in the OSCE participating States. It is the feeling of insecurity which finds expression in dangerous simplifications and searches for scapegoats. It does not matter whether we talk about promoting political participation of minorities, or protection of the victims of trafficking in human beings. There is a rise in ethnically, religiously, or racially motivated acts of violence which pose the question: Has the OSCE become an area of intolerance? Does security challenge freedom, justice and tolerance?

Every manifestation of this phenomenon fuels the constant testing of our ability to tackle it. That is why the Chairmanship has raised the issue of tolerance high on the OSCE human dimension agenda. Three high-level meetings were dedicated to this issue: the Berlin Conference on anti-Semitism, the Paris Meeting on the relationship between racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic propaganda on the Internet and hate crimes, and the Brussels Conference on tolerance and the fight against racism, xenophobia and discrimination. Specific attention was also given to the legitimate concerns of the Muslim population in the OSCE area, as we discussed in Brussels the ways to confront another fast emerging negative phenomenon, namely anti-Arab sentiments and islamophobic behaviour. I expect the discussion on the dialogue Christians, Muslims and Jews to continue next year in Cordoba.

And after all these conferences, we need actions. Therefore, I call on all 55 Governments for action-related policies to implement our common vision. As I am told, ODIHR will be presenting its newly developed Programme on tolerance and non-discrimination, the activities that are already undertaken as well as those planned for the future. They include compiling tools for participating States, legislative guidelines on hate crimes and a comprehensive database to collect and disseminate information.

We need to encourage all pragmatically oriented suggestions which can help generate tolerance and non-discrimination particularly on a grass-root level. Where, after all, do human rights begin? In small places, close to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person: the neighbourhood he or she lives in, the school he attends, his or her working place. These are the places where everyone seeks equal justice, equal opportunity and equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have local meaning there, they have no meaning anywhere.

I expect strong input from the representatives of the civil society during the discussions on rule of law issues, including prevention of torture, independence of judiciary and fair trials. All these are today as relevant as ever, they provide for efficient functioning of our democracies.

Democracy, however, cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education. The old Latin saying *Scientia ist potentia* reflects the importance of knowledge as a source of human progress. By declaring it as one of its priorities, the Bulgarian Chairmanship has tried to accentuate the role of education as a major tool for setting up democratic institutions and securing democratic governance, for generating respect for human rights and promoting tolerance, for raising human resources for successful market economies and achieving sustainable economic development. We believe that our campaign was well supported by the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on human rights education and training, the Meeting of Ministers of Education in Tashkent, the discussion at the Economic Forum in Prague, etc. We expect the results to be summarized and lead us to recommendations regarding the follow-up actions.

Follow-up is also needed in the other areas of OSCE activity. We believe that the OSCE can provide the adequate mechanisms to coordinate the efforts to establish modern norms and forms of border management and control. This is particularly important with regards not only to human rights issues like the freedom of movement

and free choice of residence, but also to cross-cutting problems, such as combating organized crime, illicit trade and traffic of arms and drugs, trafficking in human beings, etc. We started the OSCE 30 years ago, inspired by the idea of free movement of people. And we have to work hard until we reach the relevant standards that may in the long run permit the free movement of people in the whole OSCE area.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We all have the obligation to abide by the very standards of behaviour that we pledge to at our political fora, in particular tolerance, non-discrimination and equality in treatment. And it refers also to the usage of our languages, be it French, German or Russian. Having said this, we took note of the recent debate in the Permanent Council regarding ODIHR's role and activities. The Bulgarian Chairmanship shares the opinion that the questions raised up in this respect should be discussed in good faith and in a constructive manner, taking into account all expressed positions and points of view.

Co-ordination is the key word when we think of improved effectiveness, especially having in mind the constant call for result-oriented actions which comes from every OSCE forum. As a politician, I cannot escape the feeling that the OSCE needs to escape the bureaucratic *status quo* that is embracing its institutions, bodies and field missions. We have a tremendous resource in our institutions – the ODIHR, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Representative on the Freedom of Media. The coordination among these Institutions as well as with the political leadership of the organization needs to be enhanced. OSCE and its institutions should speak in one voice, should send the same message. I urge all participants to come up – by the Sofia Ministerial in December - with the appropriate proposals in this respect, so that the OSCE can have a more consolidated response to the challenges of today.

I know how difficult it is to work on human rights. I have been working in this field in my country since the late 80s, when there was a need for that. In the course of the last three years I have stood in defence of – among many others - the human rights of six innocent Bulgarian and one Palestinian medics in Libya who have been behind bars for already six years. I know that it's difficult, but I also know that the efforts are worthwhile.

As I already said, democratic institutions and human rights start at the grass-root level. We can hardly expect to improve our efficiency now, in the changing realities, if we stay in the offices in Vienna, Warsaw, or Sofia. We need to go to the proper places, and work for results, as it happened during my visits to Azerbaijan and Tajikistan.

Therefore, one possible measure that I am proposing is that the next Human Dimension Meeting take place in South Caucasus. I believe the Caucasus deserve such a privilege. I would like to thank Mr. Cimoszewicz who agreed one of the next meetings to take place in the Caucasus. And we already have the invitation extended by the Georgian President Saakashvili. I believe this will not only be a sign of recognition of the recent positive developments there. It will also encourage the countries of the region to pursue even more dedicatedly the goals to which we all aspire.

Similarly, the OSCE Economic Forum may have one of its nearest editions in Central Asia. This will be a sign of understanding of the economic challenges before the

peoples of Central Asia and encouragement of their efforts in the most distant parts of OSCE area. I would like to thank the US and other government that supported this idea.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It was the Helsinki Final Act 30 years ago which acknowledged the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as our guiding principles and included them as an explicit and integral element of a security and co-operation framework. It is my expectation that this Human Dimension Implementation Meeting will prove to be another important forum to enhance the co-operation among the participating States in this crucial area.

I wish us all a beneficial discussion.