



Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2018

Closing Session:

Warsaw, 21 September 2018

Statement of the Delegation of Switzerland

Thank you Madam Director, Madam Chair,

Switzerland wishes to warmly thank you, Madam Director, as well as all the staff of ODIHR for having organized the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) in such an impeccable way. This was a truly remarkable effort and achievement.

Switzerland also wishes to thank the Italian Chairmanship for having shown leadership in convening this year's HDIM. Last, but not least we extend our thanks to the Polish authorities for having hosted and facilitated the meeting once again in the beautiful city of Warsaw.

Madam Chair

The Swiss delegation came to the HDIM to engage in substance and to listen to other participating States and to Civil Society Organizations in order to assess the state of implementation of our common human dimension commitments in the OSCE area.

These exchanges have convinced us once again about the unique value of the HDIM and of the necessity to preserve this important OSCE event. There is no doubt that this inclusive meeting is a fundamental asset of the yearly OSCE calendar of events. It constitutes a unique opportunity to assess the state of affairs regarding human rights, rule of law and democratization in the OSCE area, expressed from different governmental and non-governmental perspectives.

We regret that not all OSCE participating States decided to attend the HDIM this year. We think that where there is an empty chair, there is a missed opportunity for dialogue. At the same time, back in Vienna, we must imperatively find an adequate answer to the question of implementing paragraph 16, Chapter IV of the Helsinki Summit document of 1992, which is an undeniable part of our OSCE Acquis. In parallel, we encourage ODIHR to continue to work, in line with PC decision 476 of 2002, on sharpening the qualitative participation criteria for Civil Society Organizations. Indeed, it is important to guarantee that, at HDIM, human dimension issues are discussed between participating states and Civil Society Organizations which have relevant human rights experience and which are genuinely committed to the spirit of Helsinki in terms of tolerance and non-discrimination. Otherwise, we run the risk that a large amount of our discussion time becomes hijacked by actors who have other objectives than the promotion of human rights and democratization in the OSCE area. We want to guarantee substantial debates at HDIM, precisely because fundamental freedoms and sometimes even the very cohesion of societies are being threatened in the OSCE area.

Threats and attacks against human rights defenders and journalists in the OSCE area are not acceptable and the fact that they are on the rise is deeply worrying. It is the responsibility of States to ensure their protection. It is therefore essential that we keep our eyes and ears open and that we choose to listen and to act when violations of fundamental rights occur. These violations are also clear security threats, which the OSCE and its participating states must prevent, denounce and combat.

Human rights violations are security concerns and need to be acknowledged as such by all participating states. That is why an HDIM with all participating States and with CSO participation as large as possible under the relevant participation criteria is so important.

Madam Director you can count on Switzerland's continuous support to ODIHR for its activities in the human dimension and to HDIM as the major inclusive event in the yearly OSCE calendar.

Thank you, Madam Chair.