



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Report by ODIHR Director Janez Lenarčič

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 14, 2013

Ambassador Lenarčič, welcome back to the Permanent Council and thank you for your report. The United States takes this opportunity to reaffirm our support for ODIHR and its invaluable contributions throughout the OSCE space. At a time when a number of participating States are failing to uphold their OSCE commitments, especially in the human dimension, the work of ODIHR is ever more essential, strengthening democracies and our common security. I do not have time today to address the full range of ODIHR's work, but I would like to touch on a few aspects of your work.

ODIHR's mandate is to help OSCE participating States to "ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, to abide by the rule of law, to promote principles of democracy and ... to build, strengthen and protect democratic institutions, as well as promote tolerance throughout society." We call on all to support this critical work and to refrain from efforts, including through the annual budget exercise, to undermine ODIHR's capacity to carry out its mandate.

Ambassador Lenarčič, as you reported, a critical element of ODIHR's work is election observation. Having ODIHR, along with the OSCE PA, observe our elections with impartiality and objectivity helps all of us better implement critical OSCE commitments. ODIHR and the OSCE PA bring complementary strengths to this important enterprise, and we urge both institutions to take the necessary steps to improve coordination in this field.

As we agreed in Copenhagen, the democratic election process must be universal, equal, fair, free, transparent, and accountable. However, to assess whether elections adhere to agreed principles, ODIHR must have adequate funding and support from all participating States. We regret that ODIHR was not able to deploy a Long Term Election Observation Mission for Romania's elections last year, due to one participating State's unwillingness to join consensus on a proposal to reprogram funds for this purpose. As participating States, our aim should be to facilitate, not hinder, ODIHR's work. Going forward, we must consider new ways to support observation efforts in states west of Vienna.

Finally, let me thank you again for ODIHR's observation of the United States' elections last fall. We read the final report with interest and look forward to ODIHR's return to the United States in April to discuss its findings and recommendations. The United States plans to report on our electoral processes in a Human Dimension Committee meeting later this year. And we also look forward to continued cooperation with ODIHR regarding its request to visit Guantanamo.

The United States supports ODIHR's efforts to strengthen democratic and representative parliaments post-election. The publication of ODIHR's *Background Study: Professional and*

Ethical Standards for Parliamentarians will surely benefit participating States. Likewise, ODIHR programs focusing on women in parliaments, including the study on *Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan*, are timely and salient.

ODIHR brings credibility and experience to the field of trial monitoring. Notably, ODIHR's 2012 launch of two trial monitoring tools should enable participating States to strengthen rule of law. We commend Georgia's invitation to ODIHR to monitor trials of former Georgian officials and to provide recommendations designed to strengthen Georgia's judicial system. We hope that, if warranted, other participating States will follow Georgia's lead and draw on this facet of ODIHR's expertise. Because of the importance we attach to this endeavor, we have committed 250,000 Euros to support this project. We urge participating States to contribute needed additional resources so that ODIHR can implement the project as designed.

We also commend the November 2012 report on *Monitoring the Freedom of Peaceful Assembly in Selected OSCE participating States*, which identified the challenges that participating States, including my own, confront.

We likewise strongly support ODIHR's efforts to promote tolerance and non-discrimination. We also commend ODIHR's work with participating States and civil society to promote freedom of religion or belief and to provide constructive measures to counter intolerance. We urge all participating States to implement related commitments. Whether it is violence against immigrants, violent assaults on Jews, or intimidation of Roma communities, we must work together to eliminate manifestations of hate and religious intolerance. We also highly regard ODIHR's work with civil society in monitoring and reporting on hate crimes as a critical component of your contribution to the promotion of tolerance. ODIHR's "Training against Hate Crimes for Law Enforcement" (TAHCLE) program is a useful tool that deserves additional extra-budgetary support from participating States. Your continuing effort to address and to raise awareness about the human rights situation for Roma and Sinti communities is essential. Ten years after the publication of the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti, it is clear that participating States must redouble their efforts to promote Roma inclusion.

We look forward to ODIHR's proposed work on the protection of human rights defenders. This is a worthy and timely topic.

Ambassador Lenarčič, we also thank you for your patience as participating States debate the Human Dimension event calendar each year. We share your disappointment that we were unable to agree on that calendar today. We recognize that an agreed event calendar is necessary for ODIHR to do the work necessary to make our events meaningful. ODIHR and participating States share an obligation to make the OSCE an effective international instrument for bringing together representatives from civil society with governments in order to hold governments accountable and strengthen our shared commitment to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms and promote democratic principles of government.

Thank you again for your report today and for your team's contribution to our community. We take this opportunity to reiterate our strong and unequivocal support for ODIHR, its direction, its autonomy, and its leadership.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.