



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR TACAN İLDEM
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF TURKEY**

**In response to the address by Ambassador Janez Lenarcic, Director of the OSCE Office for
Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)**

970th Meeting of the Permanent Council, 7 November 2013

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.

Let me join the previous speakers in warmly welcoming Ambassador Lenarcic back to the Permanent Council. I wish to thank him for his comprehensive report on this year's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting.

The yearly HDIM, as the most important event in our human dimension calendar, provides an invaluable opportunity to review the implementation of our relevant commitments with the active participation of the representatives of civil society and the participating States. This year's meeting witnessed an unprecedented amount of side events, further demonstrating that the HDIM remains a prime focus of interest for the participants.

Ambassador Lenarcic gave examples in terms of the levels of participation in the various working sessions and the insufficient time slots, therefore I won't repeat them here. They clearly show the need to improve the structure and conduct of the HDIM if the meeting is to remain a truly useful platform for deliberations on all subjects pertaining to the human dimension. In this context we hope that the ongoing review of human dimension events will, in time, provide a satisfactory solution. It goes without saying that civil society's indispensable role in the HDIM should in no way be undermined in this process.

The various sessions of the HDIM once again underscored the deficiencies in the effective implementation of our human dimension commitments. As was also the case during the High-Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination held last May in Tirana, the concerns voiced by civil society in the HDIM's relevant working sessions served to highlight the widespread and ever-increasing cases of racism, xenophobia, intolerance and discrimination in the OSCE area. It is an indisputable fact that the current global economic and financial difficulties, coupled with the increase in unemployment in many participating States, is exacerbating the already grave situation on the ground. Those considered to be different or "other", whether on the basis of their ethnic background, their religious beliefs or other reasons, are frequently subjected to incidents of discrimination and xenophobia which often entail harassment and violence, violating the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the victims.

In this context I also wish to underline Islamophobia, which leads to an additional dimension of discrimination against migrant communities. More than any previous meeting, 2013's HDIM will be remembered for the large number of Islamophobic statements made by certain NGOs in numerous sessions. Appalling as they were, those remarks have also served to highlight the prevalence of intolerance and discrimination based on religion in many participating States. Thus,



not only the pressing concerns but also the anti-Muslim sentiments voiced by civil society should once more serve as a wake-up call for us all. The situation of members of other faiths or Roma and Sinti is alarming as well. We must all do more to strengthen the implementation of our commitments in the field of tolerance and non-discrimination if we are to have a realistic chance of eradicating the rising threat. It is clear that the recommendations put on record during the HDIM, including those enumerated by my delegation, should flow into our deliberations concerning the deliverables for the upcoming Kyiv Ministerial Council. In this regard, we believe the draft Ministerial Council decision proposed by the Ukrainian Chairmanship on the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief provides a timely opportunity to address, *inter alia*, the prevention of discrimination based on religion.

On the other hand, a greater involvement by the ODIHR is also necessary to address this issue. The scope of the Office's activities related to tolerance and non-discrimination should increase. My country, in continuing its cooperation with ODIHR, will be closely following this matter.

In concluding, I would like to wish Ambassador Lenarcic and his able team every success in their future endeavors.

Thank you.

