



Statement by the Delegation of Slovenia

**at the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, 25 September 2013**

Working Session 8 – Freedom of Assembly and Association

We fully subscribe to the EU statement; however we would like to add some comments from our national perspective.

We know very well how powerful freedoms, freedom of assembly and freedom of association are. They played an important role in the process of gaining our independence. Many other countries experienced the same in their transition period. We all know how important these freedoms are for a democracy. However, we still face restrictions on freedom of assembly and freedom of association in some of the OSCE countries. In our view, this issue hasn't been sufficiently addressed to date.

The universal nature of human rights represents one of the biggest challenges today as regards to the promotion and respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms as defined through a plethora of international human rights instruments, including the OSCE commitments. The universal nature of human rights should not be questioned on any grounds of traditional and cultural differences as well as cultural diversity.

Respect for human rights is a pivotal founding principle of the Slovenian state, whose very Constitution, in keeping with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, defines strong guarantees for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as for political, economic, social and cultural rights.

On the freedom of association, civil society organizations play an important role in the promotion and protection of human rights. The ability to seek and receive funding is crucial to existence and functioning of civil society organizations. Therefore, restrictions on funding can lead donors to withdraw support from civil society organizations operating in difficult environments. Without the proper funding and



without maintaining contacts with other organizations associated to their work inside or outside the countries where they are based, it is difficult to successfully perform their activities. Such restrictions weaken the valuable role of civil society and its contribution to democracy. The right of civil society organizations to seek funding, as a part of freedom of association, therefore needs to be safeguarded.

The ability to hold peaceful assemblies without undue restrictions is particularly important for groups at a higher risk of rights violation and discrimination.

It is therefore unacceptable that people participating in such peaceful assemblies should be punished for exercising their freedom of assembly. Restrictions to peaceful assembly of any kind would have a negative impact on the situation of the most vulnerable groups. For instance, discriminatory legislation against LGBT organizations is particularly damaging for the work of the LGBT NGO's and activists. It negatively encroaches upon their right to freedom of association and assembly. Therefore, we call on all states that have discriminatory laws to repeal such laws that violate the basic principle of equality of the international human rights law and standards.

We appreciate very much the activities of ODIHR in monitoring the implementation of these commitments and welcome the second cycle of monitoring of freedom of peaceful assembly. We can assure you that ODIHR is most welcome in Slovenia. We hope that all participating States will strive not only to implement the existing commitments, but will also strive to reinforce commitments in this field. Namely we all need our civil societies to hold our governments to account.