



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
24 SEPTEMBER 2007

OPENING STATEMENT BY THE AMBASSADOR OF NORWAY
H E MR. GUTTORM VIK

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me at the outset to express our gratitude to the Polish government for its great hospitality and warm welcome to Warsaw. Our thanks also go to ODIHR and the Spanish Chairmanship for the organisation of this important annual event.

Mr. Chairman,

We recognise that differences in society, culture and history may also entail different paths being taken on the road towards democracy and rule of law, and that systems of government might differ, reflecting these traditions and preferences. Nonetheless, the craving for justice, freedom, human rights and accountable and representative democratically elected governments is universal. In the long term, only systems that are responsive to the aspirations and needs of the people they govern can achieve political stability. In our opinion, a state is strong with the strengths of its democratic structures and civil freedoms.

Mr. Chairman,

We should all bear in mind that the human dimension commitments constitute the bedrock of this Organisation and a measure of its continuing success. We, the participating States, should actually take pride in being bound together by our common values and shared principles, such as respect for human rights and the rights of minorities; tolerance and non-discrimination; rule of law; and good governance, including electoral standards, freedom of the media and a strong civil society. As one of the main instruments of the OSCE, the ODIHR has demonstrated the importance of its mission, in supporting participating States in making their best efforts to adhere to the standards and commitments we all signed up to. We thank ambassador Strohal and his devoted staff for their relentless efforts in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

Human security is comprehensive and indivisible. Therefore, we believe that the human dimension of the OSCE can be further strengthened and enriched through effective links with the politico-military and economic and environmental dimensions. The three dimensions are interlinked and support each other.

The annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting is, even more than other OSCE conferences, the forum of the NGOs. Norway welcomes the broad NGO participation, and we salute their hard work in promoting human rights and democracy across the OSCE region. We shall be looking forward to their active participation in our dialogue over the next two weeks. The NGOs are our conscience – reminding us of our obligations, calling us to account if we fall short of putting those obligations into practice. They are indispensable contributors in our partnership-based peer review, and they deserve to be regarded and treated as such. Furthermore, in 1992, the participating states committed themselves to opening conferences and seminars to NGOs. Only those supporting violence may be rejected and the burden of proof rests with those wanting to reject the participation of a NGO.

May our discussions be frank and forward-looking and result in concrete and operational recommendations for the participating States and the day to day work of the OSCE.

I thank you.