



**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR STEFFEN KONGSTAD
IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ODIHR ON THE HUMAN
DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING 2017**

Delivered to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 5 October 2017

Chair,

I join others in both welcoming ODIHR's new director, Ms Ingibjörg Gísladóttir, to the Permanent Council and in thanking her for her report on the HDIM.

HDIM is not an ODIHR forum as such; it is created by the participating States, tasking ODIHR with an organizational and secretarial role. ODIHR is carrying out what the participating States have asked this institution to do. When views are expressed that some may find unfair and biased during the meeting, ODIHR is not the right addressee. Criticism of HDIM should rather be directed at ourselves, and we should look to ourselves in order to address that criticism. Faithful implementation of commitments is the best way to silence serious and relevant criticism.

Also this year at HDIM, we have listened to representatives from large international organisations and their human rights experts. We have listened to representatives from small, local organisations, struggling to make themselves heard. Some organisations are barely tolerated by their national authorities and face difficult working conditions. Certain organisations, on the other hand, speak on behalf of their governments.

Particularly palpable this year, was the way some organisations, under the guise of the principles of free expression, tolerance and non-discrimination used HDIM to express intolerant views while lamenting the freedom of expression of others. HDIM is about the implementation of OSCE commitments in the human dimension, but these organisations do not review implementation. They question the commitments.

HDIM is and must remain an arena for civil society to voice their opinions and for states to respond. Our interaction with civil society is the essence of HDIM. We value their contributions, also when we do not agree with them. The framework of HDIM should be respected. Norway looks forward to working constructively with participating States, civil society and ODIHR, to maintain HDIM as an arena for open and frank discussion

on the implementation of our commitments in the human dimension. We would have wished that all participating States had been in a position to take part at this year's HDIM.

At the same time, we recognize that HDIM has its flaws and we welcome constructive dialogue on reform of the meeting in order to ensure its optimal execution.

In conclusion, ODIHR has successfully organized a meeting offering discussions both calm and heated; we should value them both. With respect for the mandate given them, unfazed by opposition, ODIHR and its director have worked professionally and tirelessly, in concert with the Austrian chairmanship, to ensure that HDIM remains the vital platform it deserves to be. For this, they deserve the appreciation of all participating States.

Thank you.