



United States Mission to the OSCE

Closing Reinforced Plenary Session

Final Remarks

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Robert Bradtke,
Head of Delegation
OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
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Mr. Chairman,

I would like to begin, if I may, on a personal note. As I said at the opening session, this is my first HDIM. Before I came to Warsaw, I was told that this is, arguably, the largest and most important annual human rights meeting in Europe, and that it is unique for the participation of members of non-governmental organizations side-by-side with OSCE participating State representatives. It will not be surprising that I was also told by some – let me stress not in the United States Government – that the HDIM is too long, there are too many speakers, and that I would find it tiresome, if not boring.

After two weeks of listening to remarks in plenary sessions and attending side events, I have been able to come to my own understanding about this meeting, about the HDIM. I have come to understand that, in many ways, the HDIM serves as the “conscience” of the OSCE.

The HDIM is the place where we, the participating States, must face uncomfortable, unpleasant realities about ourselves. We hear about our shortcomings. We hear about our failure to live up to our commitments, about political prisoners, flawed elections, and intolerance in our societies.

As diplomats, and I have been one for forty years, we would prefer not to hear these things about our countries. And, we would prefer not to have to spend time pointing out the failures of others. We want to maintain “good relations” with the other participating States; we worry about the impact of what we say on other important interests we have; we find it easier to speak in generalities rather than raise specific, sensitive issues.

Here in Warsaw, however, at the HDIM, we should not take the easy course. And the members of non-governmental organizations and civil society remind us why. We hear from the son who simply wants to know what happened to his father who has disappeared into a prison system; we hear from Human Rights Defenders of politically motivated trials and unfair judgments; we hear from gays, Roma, Muslims, and members of other minority groups about the discrimination and violence they face; and, we hear from those who help the victims of the horrors of modern slavery. That is why shortening the HDIM or limiting the access of the NGOs would be a mistake.

I hope when we return to Vienna and to our capitals that we will listen to our “conscience;” that we will remember what we heard over the past two weeks at the HDIM;

and, that we will address our failures to fulfill our commitments in the Human Dimension and speak frankly about the shortcomings of others.

Mr. Chairman,

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to lead the U.S. delegation to this year's HDIM. My delegation has participated actively and listened carefully. We viewed this meeting – as we think others should – as the opportunity to assess participating States' gaps in implementing OSCE commitments but also to identify opportunities for practical measures to address those gaps.

We are committed to continuing to lead by example – and that means, in part, engaging openly and in good faith with those in civil society and other governments who raise questions and concerns about US policy or practice.

And we are committed to listening to and standing with civil society elsewhere in the OSCE. We know that many in the world look to us for our leadership. We know that the voice of the United States has weight, and we will deploy it carefully in defense of principles.

Words are not enough, however; participating States must be ever mindful of the human dimension commitments we have made and show the necessary political will and take the steps necessary to ensure their full implementation, whether legislative, judicial, administrative or by otherwise exercising principled leadership and political will. The human rights and fundamental freedoms that underpin our human dimension commitments are universal. Participating States must ensure their citizens are treated equally under the law; and can exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association, religion or belief, and movement without fear of persecution. Intolerance and discrimination in all forms have no place in our OSCE community and must always be condemned and combated; hate crimes must be prosecuted and the perpetrators brought to justice.

Participatory democracy depends on transparency, on governments creating the conditions for a level playing field among political competitors, freedom of the media, and the exercise by all individuals of their human rights and fundamental freedoms on-line and off-line. All individuals should be free from harassment, reprisal, intimidation or discrimination for exercising their human rights. Governments must take steps to protect protestors and demonstrators who assemble peacefully from violence by those who do not share their views.

As we work towards next year's HDIM, the United States would like to offer a challenge to all delegations. We should each endeavor to reflect in real-time the feedback and ideas we have heard from each other and from civil society. We should use the closing session next year to identify key areas where specific follow up actions are needed. In short, we should use the HDIM not only to share our assessments, but also to identify concretely how we will improve implementation.

I would like to thank the Polish Government for hosting this meeting. The people of Poland understand how important it is to fight for and defend fundamental freedoms and human rights.

I would also like to thank the Ukrainian Chairmanship for listening patiently and constructively to the comments about Ukraine at this meeting and for its energetic focus on the human dimension. And I know Ambassador Baer looks forward working with you on a successful Ministerial Council in Kyiv.

Finally, I would like to thank Ambassador Lenarcic and ODIHR for organizing this event. On behalf of my government and myself personally, let me express our gratitude to you Ambassador Lenarcic, for your professionalism, objectivity, and commitment to democracy and human rights over the past five years and throughout your career.

Thank you.