



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF FINLAND
TO THE OSCE

**15th Winter Meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
General Committee on Democracy, Human rights and Humanitarian Questions**

**Presentation of the programme and priorities of the
Human Dimension Committee by
Ambassador Katja Pehrman,
Chairperson of the Human Dimension Committee**

Madam Chairperson,
Distinguished members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly,

Let me first of all thank you for the opportunity to inform you of the priorities of the Human Dimension Committee of the OSCE for 2016. It is truly a pleasure to address this important committee of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

Madam Chairperson,

The work plan of the Human Dimension Committee that we have set out and distributed here in Vienna reflects the German OSCE Chairmanship's priorities. Human rights are a central part of the OSCE's work. Fundamental Freedoms, National Minorities, tolerance and non-discrimination, Roma and Sinti and gender equality are among the main topics, which also enjoy strong support among the participating States.

Economic, social and cultural rights are included in the agenda, as they encompass for instance the right to education and adequate housing, food and water, therefore very timely issues also in the OSCE context.

Furthermore, we are very thankful for the support received for our intention to focus on promoting rights of persons with disabilities, the prevention of torture and protecting human rights while countering terrorism. Regarding the rights of persons with disabilities, the OSCE commitments date back to the 1991 Moscow meeting. I believe

that there is a need for deepening and broadening the OSCE's engagement on disability issues.

The PA Baku Declaration in 2014 referred to the equal opportunities and expanded access to life in society for all persons with disabilities. Moreover, it encouraged for intensified efforts to prohibit discrimination against disabled persons in employment and workplace. It also urged to sign, ratify and implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and to implement the existing OSCE commitments. Perhaps this is indeed an issue, where we can and should work together.

We have aimed at minimizing duplication with other Human Dimension events and draw on synergies with the Chairmanship's plans. In addition to the sessions of the Human Dimension Committee, some topics will be tackled at other meetings and events under the umbrella of the Human Dimension of the OSCE, including IDPs and refugees.

We look forward to the discussions during the OSCE Security Days on migration in Rome next week. We also understand that a Special Permanent Council meeting on migration will be organized here in Vienna at a later stage. The debate on the human rights of migrants and refugees during this meeting is especially timely, as thousands of people continue risking their lives and leaving their countries in the OSCE neighbourhood affected by conflicts. We must not and cannot forget the human rights and humanitarian aspects of the migrant crisis.

Madam Chairperson,
Distinguished parliamentarians,

As the Chairperson-in-Office, *Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier* indicated a month ago at the Permanent Council meeting, respect for human rights and democratic governance are integral components of our joint security. The valuable work of the OSCE independent institutions benefit all of us and today we had an opportunity to hear the presentations by Ms Dunja Mijatovic and Mr Michael Link. I will continue the established practice to invite the Heads of the OSCE institutions to give their presentations in the Human Dimension Committee during this year.

I also look forward to the Human Dimension Committee session most probably in June, when you Madame Chair, will update us on the activities of the PA Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions. During this session we will also have the opportunity to focus on election-related matters and draw on the cooperation and best practices between ODIHR and Parliamentary Assembly. Thank you again, Madam Chair, for accepting my invitation to speak on these matters.

It is of utmost importance to work together. Previously today, we organized a joint side-event on "*Enhancing Women's Political Participation*" and had the pleasure of hearing views from the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Mr. Ilkka Kanerva, OSCE PA's Special Representative on Gender Issues, Dr. Hedy Fry, Director of ODIHR, Mr. Michael Link and Finnish Member of Parliament and Chair of the Delegation, Ms. Aila Paloniemi. Last year, we organized a joint side-event on mediation, where also the role of women was highlighted. I believe it is indeed very important that

we keep close contact and find synergies in our work. I warmly welcome further cooperation.

During this year, we will also have close contacts with civil society. Our goal is also to include the expertise of OSCE Field Operations in the work of the Committee. Moreover, I would welcome the engagement with Partners for Co-operation on issues related to Human Dimension.

Madam Chairperson,
Distinguished parliamentarians,

The human dimension is a fundamental component of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security. I remain optimistic in finding creative and constructive solutions in the Committee, when required. This is in our joint interest and depends on the political will of the participating States. However, this should not happen at the expense of already agreed commitments.

I have strongly encouraged delegations to voluntarily report on implementation of agreed commitments in the Human Dimension Committee. We would in particular welcome presentations with lessons learned or still to be learned. Nevertheless, voluntary reporting does not mean that countries should only present textbook examples. On the contrary. We are all here to learn from each other with the aim of implementing the jointly agreed commitments.

Our delegation stands at your disposal should you have questions about the work of the Committee. I am very fortunate to have not only an extremely motivated and hardworking team here in Vienna, but also strong support from my capital. I look forward to a meaningful dialogue, cooperation and an interesting year ahead.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.