

Highlights from OSCE PA Call for Action – Helsinki+50 meeting: focus on the Human Dimension¹

Wednesday, 20 October 2021, 14:30 – 17:00 CEST, Zoom

General suggestions:

- Panelists and participants highlighted the OSCE's Human Dimension unique nature, emphasizing that as circumstances evolved in the OSCE space, the way forward in the HD area had not always been timely explored.
- Observed existing polarization and self-engagement trends within the governmental branch of the Organization, not conducive to OSCE commitments in relation to strengthening of Human Rights.
- Affirmed the central role of peer-to-peer review in the OSCE's HD work, emphasizing that the PA should be better used to provide a substantial contribution to ensuring accountability in relation to the decision-making process within the OSCE, especially with regard to countries' lack of readiness to join consensus on important decisions.
- Reaffirmed, in this regard, the importance of ensuring that pS not joining consensus should provide clear and meaningful justification of their motives;
- Pointed out the challenges stemming from insufficient resourcing and long-delayed budgeting process of the OSCE, despite the proven efficiency of the Organization in implementing its broad mandate across the different dimensions of security;
- Touched upon the organization of the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, suggesting the opportunity to explore through a transparent dialogue its potential modernization and development, including in relation to the vital involvement of the civil society, in light of the changed security environment;
- Emphasized that despite many successful activities and good results of practical cooperation in the HD field, these remain largely unknown to the governments, national legislatures and the general public, while stressing the fundamental role of

¹ The Highlights from the OSCE PA Call for Action - Helsinki +50 Meetings are not intended to be official conclusions, nor an exhaustive list of all issues or suggestions raised during the debate, but rather a compilation of points recorded for possible future reference. As this compilation is not exhaustive, any comments or suggested additions are welcome.

parliamentarians in better reflecting the OSCE agenda and challenges in the policy-making work of their respective parliaments;

- Highlighted the potential stemming from the use of new communication technologies in raising public awareness about the work of the OSCE, leading to stronger public accountability of governments in relation to implementation of their commitments;
- Encouraged the strengthening or establishment of civil society organizations (e.g., Helsinki Committees) providing inspiration to governmental policies in the OSCE and inputs to national parliaments, suggesting that OSCE parliamentarians could inspire or directly support the establishment of such organizations;
- Pointed out the serious repercussions of a potential limitation of civil society engagement in the work of the Organization, which would adversely impact the ability of the Organization to take effective action to ensure protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms by all participating States.
- Proposed the development of a joint and sustained dialogue platform as a PA initiative intended to look into challenges, experiences and expectations for the future of the Organization in the HD and beyond, establishing a systematic follow-up procedure for observations and proposals put forward by OSCE Institutions and Field Operations;
- Proposed the development of a register/compilation of success stories in implementing HD commitments, opening it up for reference and transparency to the greater public. More specifically, it was suggested that the OSCE should record the existing good practices in the participating States, which the PA could then discuss in order to promote their general application; bad practices would be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, not at the level of the institutions through a process of public shaming ("name and shame"), but at the level of the field missions which would seek to find practical solutions through negotiations.
- Argued that the OSCE (and the PA, in particular), should urgently put on their agenda the issues which have led to widespread protests against measures allegedly limiting human rights and fundamental freedoms in the wake of the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. This important question warrants a debate in the OSCE PA, which should inspire national parliaments to take a stand vis-à-vis the respective governments in relation to these claims.
- Stressed the need to ensure topical and timely follow up to EOM's final report recommendations.
- Reiterated the suggestion that non-sensitive discussions in the Permanent Council should be open to the public to ensure openness and higher visibility of the Organization.