



Statement of
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Commission on Security & Cooperation in Europe
Washington, D.C.

Dear Chairman Smith,
Esteemed Members of Congress,
Commissioners,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and an honour for me to speak in front of you today. As you know, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights will be celebrating the 25th anniversary of its foundation this year, and I can only thank you for your continuing interest and support of our work in all these years. It was the United States government who proposed to create specialised OSCE institutions to assist participating States in the implementation of their human dimension commitments a quarter of a century ago, and I am happy to report that this commitment to our work has never faded. We truly appreciate the fact that this Commission has always kept human rights and the human dimension of security at the top of the OSCE's agenda.

In the 25th year of our existence, the scope of our work is as broad and as deep as ever. Whether in the fields that we are probably most known for, election observation or fighting anti-Semitism, or in the areas of fighting discrimination against Christians or Muslims, fostering integration of the Roma minority or combating trafficking of human beings, our extremely dedicated and able team of experts is able to offer a very broad set of activities in assisting our participating States, despite ever dwindling resources.

Let me, however, start by expressing a serious concern of mine: I am deeply troubled about the decreasing attention human rights are receiving in the OSCE.

- The OSCE is a major regional organization whose very essence is to connect Human Rights to Security, but its commitments in the field of human rights are less and less respected in numerous participating States.
- The OSCE is about connecting Human Rights to Security, but it is no longer able in its Ministerial Meetings to agree in consensus on new texts in its human dimension.
- The OSCE is about connecting Human Rights to Security, but its main institutions in the human dimension like ODIHR are not funded properly in order fulfill their mandates.

That is why our work depends more and more on extrabudgetary funding outside the official OSCE budget and I would like to ask you for your support to continue ODIHR's work, driven by our common values.

This is, for example, the fight against anti-Semitism. As Ambassador Power put it last year at the 2014 Berlin declaration commemorative event: rising anti-Semitism "is often the canary in the coal mine for degradation of human rights more broadly". All OSCE participating States agree on this principle: anti-Semitism is indeed a worrying signal for human rights overall.

Anti-Semitism was first condemned in an OSCE document in 1990. Other declarations have been adopted afterwards, including the 2004 Berlin declaration, reinforced 10 years later by the Basel Ministerial Council decision. In this decision, participating States have expressed their concerns about the rise in anti-Semitic incidents. They declared unambiguously that international developments, including with regard to the situation in the Middle East, never justify anti-Semitism. In addition, they called for enhanced efforts in combating anti-Jewish hatred, including through education and remembrance of the Holocaust, and in monitoring, reporting and investigating of hate crimes.

ODIHR's activities today revolve around three pillars that are constantly mentioned in our commitments: hate crimes, education, and Holocaust remembrance.

First, hate crimes. Anti-Semitic hate crimes remain a challenge throughout the region. A recent attack against a Jewish man in France has opened a debate on the opportunity to wear religious symbols. In the US, civil society organisations have reported an increased number of registered anti-Semitic incidents on college campuses. ODIHR has a strong mandate to collect and report on hate crime data and on capacity building for law enforcement. Unfortunately, only 10 of the 57 participating States have submitted official information on anti-Semitic hate crimes for the latest reporting cycle, whereas civil society information covered 29 countries.

The second pillar of our work against anti-Semitism is related to the development of educational materials which are shaped by the local reality. Our teaching materials have been implemented in 12 participating States, with the potential for expansion to additional countries. This teaching material is more than ever important today, when expressions of

anti-Semitism on the internet are various, and often go hand in hand with declarations that aim at rewriting Second World War history and its atrocities.

This leads me to the third pillar of our work in this field, - Holocaust remembrance. To date, 34 participating States commemorate the Holocaust on 27 January, while many countries hold commemorations on different days. In almost two thirds of OSCE participating States, at various levels of education, children are taught about the tragedy of the Holocaust. Where education and remembrance do not suffice, we should strengthen our efforts in ensuring the security of Jewish communities.

All these pillar will be combined in our newest project, called “Turning words into action”. This project is set out to help turn these words into action by providing government officials, parliamentarians and civil society with the knowledge and skills they need to effectively address anti-Semitism. It will enable governments to respond to the security needs of Jewish communities, counter anti-Semitism through education and finally foster coalition building. The project was made possible thanks to a generous contribution of the German government – thus giving an excellent example of how countries can support ODIHR’s work through extra funding.

We would like to do more of this work, for instance in the field of fighting discrimination of Christians – a topic of huge importance in the OSCE states to which I am personally very committed. With more funds, ODIHR would be able to do much more work in this field.

Let me give you an update on our activities in Ukraine, where we are very active in different areas. The situation in the country is still difficult, despite some progress made in the past two years. We need to redouble our efforts to stabilize the country through reform.

- We are supporting reform in Ukraine through strengthening its civil society
- We are supporting reform in Ukraine through observing its elections and giving recommendations on how to improve in this area
- We are supporting reform in Ukraine through giving legal advice to the parliament on how best draft laws in accordance with international human rights standards
- We are supporting reform in Ukraine in bringing religious communities together, to become engines of national dialogue.

Let me stress on two points:

1. The human rights situation on Crimea is deeply worrying. Despite not having been granted access, ODIHR was able to publish a comprehensive report on the situation six months ago, a strong document showing the difficult state of the rights of national minorities and other citizens. We are ready to follow up on this report, but for this we need access for ODIHR monitors.
2. We have to make all possible efforts to bring peace to this country. I believe that the so called Minsk package, agreed upon last year, is still the best way to achieve it. ODIHR stands ready to do its part in observing possible local elections in the conflict areas of the Donbas regions as part of a political settlement. But these elections are contingent upon a sustainable ceasefire and the political will to hold them. The equation is simple: Where there is war, there is no voting. Elections are only possible where there is peace: "Bullets have to be replaced by ballots". We therefore fully share the view of the German Chancellor, who reconfirmed last week after her meeting with the Ukrainian President, that a ceasefire was the essential pre-condition for the implementation of the Minsk package.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, let me thank you and this commission, as well as the United States of America, for their support to our activities. I would be very happy to answer your questions now.

Thank you.