

14th HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

28 September 2009

Warsaw



Opening remarks by

Ambassador Janez Lenarčič

Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and great privilege for me to welcome you here today for the opening of the 14th Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. Let me start by welcoming our panellists this morning: H.E. Madame *Grażyna Maria Bernatowicz*, Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, representing the host country; Ambassador *Nikolaos Kalantzianos*, Head of the OSCE Chairmanship Task Force, representing the Chairperson-in-Office; the OSCE Secretary-General, *Marc Perrin de Brichambaut*; and the Representative on Freedom of the Media, *Miklos Haraszti*.

It is my special pleasure to introduce H.E. *Władysław Bartoszewski*, as our keynote speaker. *Jestem zaszczycony mogąc Pana dzisiaj gościć!*

I would also like to warmly welcome all delegations who are present here in large numbers, as well as a strong presence of the civil society actors.

Before I give the floor to our speakers, let me start by sharing a few of my own thoughts about the context of this year's HDIM.

Ever since I assumed my position of ODIHR Director a little more than a year ago, I have been advocating one single tenet. For the majority of you present here, it will not come as a surprise when I state that all activities of the OSCE are guided by commitments adopted by participating States. ODIHR is no exception. Together with other institutions represented here on this panel, it is there to monitor the implementation of the human dimension commitments, and to assist States in addressing the gap between commitments and reality.

There is a phrase that I unfortunately still keep hearing and which, despite our continuous efforts, we cannot seem to overcome: '*double standards*'. I think this implementation meeting is another opportunity to re-affirm that there is only one standard, and it is contained in the OSCE Human Dimension Commitments book.

There is certainly no perfection in this world; there is no model State, no ideal society and there is no flawless democracy. By adopting a comprehensive set of commitments to abide by, the participating States have, however,

demonstrated their willingness and preparedness to approach and achieve what at least in OSCE terms is considered an ultimate goal.

Yet because democracy has no finality, and because there are no finishing lines for democratic development, I always find the view that democracy commitments were ‘invented’ by a group of countries to be exclusively exported to another group of countries quite false. It is nothing but a reflection of a block mentality which we should be able to overcome 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall – which we celebrate next month.

There are, surely, various ways to approach the implementation of commitments. Consequently, OSCE States develop at different paces and find themselves in different stages of implementation. But often we hear some countries claiming ‘specificity’ in their democratic development, and argue that “*the people are not yet ready to practice the full array of democratic rights*”, or that “*our culture is not suited to democratic ways*”.

My answer to this is: It can not be true.

Of course, culture and democratic tradition matters. But there is nothing like ‘unpreparedness’ in a people’s desire for human dignity and freedom. I believe this argument can be answered

easily: no one 'naturally', or because of specific cultural 'specificities', enjoys being deprived of the rights and freedoms whose promise is enshrined in the OSCE's human dimension commitments.

I welcome you all again to Warsaw and wish you an interesting HDIM.

Thank you.