

Presentation by the Chairperson of the Human Dimension Committee

1216th Permanent Council, 7 February 2019

Excellencies, Dear colleagues,

I would like to start by thanking the Chairperson of this Council for assigning me the very important task of chairing the Human Dimension Committee. It is an honour both for the Czech Republic and for me personally.

Protection and promotion of human rights has been a long-standing priority of the Czech foreign policy, including in the OSCE and other international fora. Lasting security cannot be achieved without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The dialogue in the Human Dimension Committee contributes to advancing and strengthening the human dimension of security in the OSCE region and to the implementation of our human dimension commitments.

Bringing about real change in people's lives is one of the priorities of the Slovak Chairmanship. It will also be my priority and guidance in the Human Dimension Committee. I will work in close cooperation with the Slovak Chairmanship. My intention is to build upon their priorities and provide them with effective support, including in the run up to the Ministerial Council in Bratislava. I look forward to joint events together with the Slovak Chairmanship as well as the Chairpersons of the other two Committees.

The bar has been set high by our British colleagues, who chaired the Committee in the past two years. My ambition is to keep up the high standards of the HDC work and continue to have productive and interactive discussions on topical issues. I would also like to use this opportunity to congratulate the previous Italian OSCE Chairmanship and the UK HDC Chairmanship for the excellent achievements in the human dimension in Milan.

The proposed preliminary work programme of the Human Dimension Committee for 2019 focuses on human rights and fundamental freedoms, and includes civil and political rights; economic, social and cultural rights and tolerance and non-discrimination.

We will start our substantive work in the Committee by addressing the topical and broad issue of Participation in Public and Political Life. Effective participation in public and political life requires an environment where all human rights are fully respected, and enjoyed by all individuals. Last year's discussions on the participation of women in public and political life, as well as the publication of the ODIHR status report on the participation of Roma and Sinti in public and political life, confirm that it is a topical issue in the OSCE.

Apart from this, the HDC indicative work plan contains the following thematic areas: Tolerance and Non-discrimination, including hate crime; Freedom of Expression, Free Media and Information; Prevention of Torture and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Taking up these topics on the HDC agenda will make it possible to follow up on the previous exchanges in the Committee and other human dimension events.

We welcome the adoption of the Ministerial Council decision on the Safety of Journalists and the decision on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women. We would like to use the HDC platform to support their implementation.

The year 2019 is an important election year for many in this hall. Therefore we have decided to include the topic of Elections in the HDC agenda. The topic can be approached from many different angles, for example the implementation of recommendations in reports of ODIHR Election Observation Missions and presenting good practices in this regard.

The topic of the final HDC meeting in 2019 is the 30th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution. The Velvet Revolution in the former Czechoslovakia

of 1989 was a part of events and important changes in large parts of the OSCE region 30 years ago. This seemingly historical topic is still very relevant today. Important OSCE commitments and mechanisms in the human dimension were agreed and affirmed then, for example in the Vienna Document of 1989. When exploring this topic, the Committee can reflect on the topical issues of the role of civil society and human rights defenders and freedom of assembly and association.

Regarding freedom of religion or belief, it will be included in the 2019 human dimension calendar in coordination with the Slovak Chairmanship and ODIHR.

The indicative list of topics is neither comprehensive nor exhaustive. Some important issues will be taken up by the Chairmanship, others could be covered by joint committee meetings or will be addressed at various other human dimension events during the year. Besides, my intention is to mainstream gender equality throughout all the work of the Committee.

Regarding working methods in the Human Dimension Committee, I would like to continue the good tradition established by the previous Chairmanship. Each meeting will have a thematic focus. A concept note will always be circulated, to guide our discussions. I will invite guest speakers, including representatives of civil society, OSCE institutions and field missions, to address our meetings and inspire our deliberations. I have invited the Director of ODIHR and the Representative on Freedom of the Media to address the Committee and I would like to invite members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to one of our meetings. Last but not least, I very much look forward to your voluntary reports in the Committee.

Finally, I want to thank partners and institutions for the preliminary exchange of views, which certainly helped us to better understand some concerns and gain deeper insight into many human rights issues. We will continue to reach

out to you. I would be grateful if we can keep the same spirit of cooperation and dialogue in the Committee during the whole year.

I look forward to working together with all of you.

Thank you.