



OSCE PA Vice-President Kari Henriksen

Remarks to the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Working Session 11, Fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, national human rights institutions and the role of civil society in the protection of human rights, and freedom of movement

17 September 2018, Warsaw

It is an honor to represent the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly at this forum.

I would like to emphasize that the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association should be enjoyed equally by all and highlight the importance of creating the appropriate conditions for women to be able to exercise this right.

Women's freedom of expression and fundamental rights should not be restricted by culture, religion, unfair laws or unfair politics.

In our OSCE context, it is therefore important to actively seek co-operation with NGOs that organize women with an independent voice.

The OSCE must encourage the right of women to organize by allowing women's organizations to become natural partners in the OSCE's work in all three dimensions.

In this context I would like to draw attention to the resolutions of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly stressing the importance of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in a number of areas, in particular in conflict prevention and post conflict rehabilitation, and urging the OSCE to incorporate women's and gender perspectives in its work.

The 62nd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women addressed the empowerment of rural women and girls. Here, there was a plethora of women's voices from all over the world. However, some voices are not being heard.

To obtain their own voice, women need opportunities to organize themselves in civil society. Such opportunities must be created through legislation and effective implementation to bring about change and ensure that women enjoy these rights in practice.

Women are independent by virtue of being human. In many societies this independence is suppressed through traditions and laws that allow forced marriages, they do not receive schooling, cannot own property but only have rights through a male relative.

In many countries, women protest against such oppression and organize themselves in civil society. In many cases, they are subjected to a range of attacks, from degrading and hateful comments in the media to domestic violence as a response to raising their voice.

Thank you once again to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the OSCE Chairmanship for convening this important event.