



**Permanent Delegation of Sweden**  
to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

**Joint Nordic-Baltic Statement in response to the report by the Director of ODIHR, Matteo Mecacci**

at the

**1465<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Permanent Council, 14 March 2024**

**Delivered by Sweden**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you, Madame Chair,

I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, and my own country Sweden.

We would like to warmly thank Director Mecacci for his report and express our deep gratitude to him and the office for your professionalism, integrity and commitment in fulfilling the mandate of ODIHR. The Nordic and Baltic countries continue to wholeheartedly support the mandate and autonomy of the Office.

In times of democratic backsliding and increased violations of human rights in many parts of the OSCE area, ODIHR's work to support participating States in living up to our joint commitments on human rights, democracy, and the rule of law is more needed than ever before. These issues are at the core of the OSCE concept of comprehensive security. We are also facing increased hate speech and a serious backlash against hard-won gains on gender equality. These trends must be reversed urgently.

ODIHR's mandate plays a crucial role in doing so. We call on all participating States to support the work and mandate of ODIHR, and to ensure that the Office is sufficiently resourced and staffed to be able to do its crucial work at this critical point in time.

Moreover, the Nordic-Baltic countries highly value ODIHR's election observation work, which sets the highest international standards in this field. This work is perhaps more important than ever in this "super election year" that is 2024. We further commend and value your principled cooperation with participating States when it comes to technical support and capacity building to strengthen the implementation of human dimension commitments, including in Central Asia, western Balkans, south Caucasus, and elsewhere.

We are pleased to see that most states open their elections for independent observations and are open for ODIHR advice on how to improve their election process. However, the decisions of Russia and Belarus not to invite OSCE observers

for their elections, do – as pointed out by ODIHR – go against both the letter and the spirit of collaboration on which the OSCE is based, and is contrary to the commitments made by all OSCE participating States.

We commend ODIHR's work relating to human rights monitoring in Ukraine. In this regard, we thank you for the Fourth Interim Report which highlights Russian violations such as arbitrary deprivation of liberty and enforced disappearances, torture and ill-treatment, deportations of civilians, forced adoption of Russian citizenship, and unlawful restrictions on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, among many others. The reporting forms an important contribution to efforts towards ensuring accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law during Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. We would also like to take the opportunity to thank ODIHR for the technical assistance provided to the missions of experts deployed under the Moscow Mechanism.

We would also like to thank the Office for the important work you do in supporting and monitoring the situation for civil society and human rights defenders, and your important cooperation with them. Human rights defenders play an essential role in shedding light on violations and abuses, often at high personal risk. We remember among these Alexei Navalny who died last month serving a lengthy prison sentence following years of unjust imprisonment and the denial of his rights. And we note with sadness that Oleg Orlov from the Nobel Peace Prize-winning human rights group Memorial recently was sentenced to a penal colony in the Russian Federation.

Madame Chair,

We call on all participating States to fulfil their obligations and commitments related to human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and we reaffirm our commitment to do the same. This lies at the heart of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security, as there can be no security without respect for human rights of all.

Mr. Mecacci, we wish you and the entire team at ODIHR continued success in all your future endeavours.

I thank you.