



**Statement by H.E. Helga Hauksdóttir,
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Iceland,
at the Opening Session of the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference,
2 October 2023 Warsaw**

Thank you Mr. Chair,

Excellencies, distinguished delegates

While Iceland aligns with the statement of the European Union, allow me to add a few remarks in my national capacity.

The protection and promotion of human rights and democracy is at the heart of Iceland's foreign policy and integral to ensuring peace, security, and justice.

Iceland strongly condemns Russia's continued systematic violation and abuse of international humanitarian law and human rights law; its indiscriminate and cruel attacks targeting civilians, civilian objects, critical infrastructure, and residential areas in Ukraine. Its forcible and despicable transfer and deportation of Ukrainian children remains a primary concern. Full accountability and justice must be ensured in accordance with international law.

Iceland strongly condemns the illegal involvement of Belarussian authorities in Russia's war, and their continued infringement of fundamental rights, attacks on civil society and relentless efforts to silence independent voices in Belarus.

Mr. Chair,

Yesterday Ukraine marked the Day of Ukraine's Defenders, and in accordance with Ukraine's inherent right to self-defence, the people of Ukraine have courageously shown that democracy, rule of law, freedom, and human rights are values worth fighting for. Iceland remains firmly committed to Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. We will support Ukraine for as long as it takes.

Today, we are faced with a serious pushback against human rights, multilateralism, and democratic values, including gender equality and women's rights. We must work together to reverse these trends and protect and preserve these values and rights, for all people, in all our countries. We must anchor our action in international law and the protection of human dignity and human rights.

While the Russian Federation has yet again deliberately misused the consensus rule to block the decision on HDIM, the participating States represented here recognise that the matters to be discussed for the next two weeks are both urgent and of critical importance. Iceland is deeply grateful to the Chairpersonship of North-Macedonia for convening the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference during this critical and troubling time for the OSCE region and beyond.

As the North-Macedonian OSCE Chairpersonship reminds us, ultimately, our work is for the benefit of civil society, to deliver real and lasting results for the people of our region. That is exactly what this Conference signifies so strongly, as well as the significant convening power of the OSCE and the unique value of our organization.

Iceland looks forward to engaging in the work of the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference in the coming two weeks.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.