

Summary of the Vienna Declaration

Presentation by Yuri Dzhibladze at the side event during the OSCE Human Dimension Committee meeting

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Thank you, Ambassador, and the Albanian mission, for organising this side event. We are happy that a tradition of presentation of declarations of civil society's Parallel Conferences at the Human Dimension Committee meetings continues.

I am honoured to present a summary of the Vienna Declaration. Much of its analysis and recommendations derive from the outcome document of the Helsinki+50 Reflection Process. I encourage you to study both documents in full. They can be found on the website of the Civic Solidarity Platform.

We will go chapter by chapter and start with our strong belief that **the Helsinki principles and the notion of comprehensive security are as vital today as 50 years ago**. However, their implementation has severely deteriorated.

The OSCE is in crisis due to its inability to prevent or stop Russian aggression, address deteriorating implementation of commitments, and ensure accountability for violations.

Moreover, the OSCE and its participating States have not engaged vigorously enough in addressing new challenges such as the climate crisis, the impacts and root causes of migration, the backlash against gender equality, attack on civil society, and the use of hybrid non-military tools. A constellation of crisis situations requires urgent attention, determination, creativity, and concrete steps from OSCE bodies and participating States. Simply preserving the OSCE as a "platform for dialogue" is absolutely insufficient.

The collapse of the post-Cold War security order makes it painfully clear that security cannot be achieved through force and military means alone. Ignoring the human and environmental-economic dimensions of security leads not to order, but to catastrophe.

OSCE documents emphasise the comprehensive nature of security, but the Organisation's complex and decentralised structure leads to compartmentalisation of the work in the three dimensions. OSCE stakeholders should urgently institutionalise a cross-dimensional approach in all OSCE activities.

Ensuring respect for the OSCE *acquis* is impossible without securing accountability. This must involve systematic documentation of violations, introduction of procedures of review of the implementation of commitments, consistent use of non-consensus mechanisms, taking follow-up steps, practicing the Helsinki principles in foreign policy, and supporting international accountability mechanisms.

Further, we look at **the role of the OSCE in politico-military security dimension**. We find the work of OSCE in promoting peace and stability largely ineffective. Shortcomings and failures are primarily a result of the policies of participating States and their unwillingness to find peaceful solutions to disputes. The OSCE has an effective security toolbox but participating States do not use it in earnest. This has to change.

Overall, the OSCE's role in the politico-military security field needs to be reconceptualised and formulated more clearly. For example, OSCE could play an important role as a platform for monitoring and assisting in the implementation of agreements achieved elsewhere, including future agreements to end Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Importantly, respect for international law should be placed at the core of all decisions related to re-building European security architecture. All activities in OSCE conflict-related work should integrate a strong human security focus, with "people first" principle put in the centre.

Participating States and OSCE structures should strengthen responses to hybrid non-military security threats, including propaganda and disinformation.

Building durable peace is not possible without ensuring justice for victims and ending impunity of perpetrators.

We believe that civil society can and should play a more important role in politico-military security work.

It remains an untapped potential in the politico-military dimension. There is no formal mandate for OSCE politico-military forums and structures to be open to civil society, unlike in the human dimension – but this is not forbidden and should be pursued. OSCE stakeholders should create spaces and processes for systematically including civil society in the work in the first dimension and institutionalise meaningful participation of experts from both academic and practice fields.

Civil society would be able to contribute much more in addressing conflicts if it could:

- work more actively with the Conflict Prevention Centre and the HCNM,
- was provided with early warning indicators,
- systematically consulted by the Special Representatives on mediation in particular conflict situations,
- actively involved by field operations in dialogue programmes,
- more actively used in transitional justice, legal processes, and rehabilitation of victims.

Moving to the second dimension, we look at **ensuring effective addressing of environmental security concerns.**

We believe that the OSCE should place environmental security and the climate crisis much higher on its agenda and broaden its concept of environmental security to better incorporate the intersectional and interdimensional nature of the issue, including its impacts on migration, gender, minorities, Indigenous rights, conflict, and transboundary issues.

A more comprehensive annual review of participating States' record on implementing their second dimension commitments should be developed.

Civil society should be much more vigorously included in the second dimension. Relevant OSCE bodies should invite civil society experts to speak at meetings and include CSOs in monitoring, analysis, programme development, implementation and assessment.

The OSCE should establish a position of the Rapporteur on Security of Environmental and Climate Defenders or include this problem in the mandate of the Special Representative on Civil Society.

Further, we emphasise the importance of **adopting a feminist perspective to security**.

A gendered lens is of utmost importance for the future of the OSCE. It requires a cross-dimensional institutionalised strategy and a better understanding that a feminist, intersectional, and human-centred approach is essential for building sustainable peace, human security, and gender equality. Integrating feminist perspectives and ensuring engagement of women's organisations should be applied in all three dimensions.

In the politico-military dimension, the OSCE should open its structures to integrate feminist perspectives and ensure engagement of women's organisations in all stages of conflict work.

In the economic and environmental dimension attention should be paid to gender transformative approaches in changing discriminatory structures, norms and power dynamics.

In the human dimension, accountability for human rights violations of women should be ensured by tackling patriarchal dominance and implementing anti-discrimination measures

Finally, we address the conceptual issue of **expanding civil society engagement in upholding the Helsinki principles and protecting civic space**. This is relevant to all OSCE activities.

Although a range of opportunities for civil society organisations to participate in OSCE meetings exist, there are no mechanisms for them to affect OSCE policies and decision-making. Declarations about participation are not backed by relevant policies, procedures, and funding.

OSCE stakeholders should analyse avenues for civil society engagement, strengthen existing mechanisms and develop new ones, based on treating CSOs as partners in deliberations, drafting of documents and the development, implementation and assessment of activities.

Chairpersonship, institutions and participating States should ensure space for presentation of civil society analysis and recommendations and, importantly, provide substantive reaction to them.

Existing tools for protecting civil society space should be used more effectively and strategically and better coordinated among key OSCE actors. All OSCE actors together should develop and put to work a system of reacting to repressive laws and policies restricting civic space and cases of persecution, with a clear "division of labour" between relevant stakeholders. This should include but not be limited to the cases of reprisals for engaging with the OSCE.

Chairpersonships should:

- actively involve civil society in the implementation of its priorities in all three dimensions;
- provide support in opening the first and the second dimensions to civil society;
- play a leading role in placing the problem of shrinking civic space higher on the OSCE agenda;

- extend annually the mandate of the Special Representative on Civil Society, task it with acting as a focal point between OSCE stakeholders on matters of civil society participation and the protection of civic space, and allocate necessary resources.

ODIHR should:

- better utilise civil society expertise by activating its expert panels and establishing new ones, such as the panel of experts on torture prevention,
- activate its work on securing civic space by doing regular monitoring and producing reports,
- develop a programme of implementation of the updated Guidelines on Security of HRDs.

Participating States should:

- establish an informal “group of friends of civil society” to develop strategies on enhancing civil society participation and reversing the backlash against it;
- overcome the symbolic nature of meetings with CSOs on the margins of OSCE events by turning them into a joint process of reflection and planning;
- establish a dedicated fund to support civil society work on upholding the Helsinki principles on a sustainable and predictable basis.

Participants of the Parallel Civil Society Conference stated that the implementation of OSCE commitments continues to deteriorate across the entire OSCE region. Situation in several participating States is particularly worrying. Therefore, along with the Vienna Declaration, participants of the Conference adopted a second outcome document, **a Statement on Country Situations Requiring Urgent Attention**. The list includes 11 countries, both East and West of Vienna, situations in which civil society highlighted as very serious.

Wide-ranging problems found in essentially all of these countries include the undermining of the principles of democratic governance, erosion of the rule of law, restrictions of democratic elections, lack of independence of the judiciary and fair trial guarantees, abuse of state security laws as a pretext for restriction of human rights, politically motivated persecution of critics of the authorities on fabricated charges, suppression of the freedom of expression, independent media and internet, restriction of the freedom of peaceful assembly and criminalisation of protest, adoption of repressive laws and policies against civil society resulting in the elimination of civic space, widespread torture in the hands of police and in places of detention, the use of transnational repression for persecution of exiled opponents, discrimination against minorities, attacks on migrants, and pervasive impunity of perpetrators of violations. Governments share worst practices, copy-paste repressive laws, and cooperate in persecuting their opponents.

Situation in Ukraine is very dire but different from those in other ten states, as daily numerous crimes and terror in the course of the unceasing Russian aggression remains the main challenge to the sovereignty of this country and lives of its residents.

While the list of problematic country situations is not exhaustive, those reviewed in the Statement require immediate attention and urgent response by OSCE political bodies, institutions, participating States, and civil society in order to reverse the negative developments and provide support to victims of violations and those who work to stop the abuse. To facilitate a response, we provide specific recommendations on each country situation. In encouraging all stakeholders to act, we remind them that the key principle that implementation of human dimension commitments “are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States

and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned” should remain at the centre of the European security order.