



**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
1141th Meeting of the Permanent Council,
06 April 2017**

*in response to the Director of ODIHR
Mr. Michael Link*

Mr. Chairperson,

The Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan warmly welcomes the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Mr. Michael Link to the Permanent Council and thanks him for presenting a comprehensive report on the activities of ODIHR.

We noted that during the past year, along with election observation, the Office was involved in wide range of activities, such as protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, and improving the situation of Roma and Sinti societies. In particular, we welcome ODIHR's efforts to prevent and respond to hate crimes and discrimination, in line with the relevant OSCE decisions and thank the Office for co-organizing an event on "Interreligious Dialogue for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Discrimination", held last October in Baku. We believe that, this positive example of promoting and sharing best practices of tolerance among participating States must be sustained during the upcoming years. The Republic of Azerbaijan is ready to continue its constructive engagement with the Office in this regard.

We observed that in the wake of migrant and refugee crisis, the Office has provided advice, assistance and support to participating States in responding to these challenges. Nevertheless, we regret to observe lack of attention to the issue of IDPs in ODIHR's activities. The protection of the rights of internally displaced persons and seeking durable solutions to their situations, including the exercise of their right to return in safety and dignity and their reintegration into places of origin without discrimination must be addressed by ODIHR.

In this regard, we recall the OSCE commitments, in particular 1992 Helsinki Summit Declaration and 1996 Lisbon Summit Declaration where participating States agrees that they "...will facilitate the return, in safety and in dignity, of refugees and internally displaced persons, according to international standards. Their reintegration into their places of origin must be pursued without discrimination". Furthermore, Annex to Decision 1 of Bucharest Ministerial Council of 2001 underlines that in order to address the issue of protracted displacement, participating States and OSCE institutions "...will explore strengthened OSCE potential for contributing to durable solutions, supporting and closely co-operating with other relevant organizations... and will closely monitor situations of protracted displacement."

In light of these existing OSCE commitments, we would like to engage with the Director and his Office on possible activities that can be done to assist participating States upon their request in finding solution to problems of this vulnerable group. We wish to underline that cooperation between ODIHR and participating State concerned on this issue is the clear demonstration of willingness of state to implement its human dimension commitments and on the other hand, is in the interest of entire organization. As the measure of the first instance, our Delegation expects that the topic of humanitarian issues and other commitments, including refugees and IDP's will be reintroduced to the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting and in general, into the human dimension package.

As for the HDIM, we want to express once again our concern with regard to participation of entities registered in the OSCE participating States who commend violence and propagate separatism at the HDIM meetings. OSCE platform should not be abused for such purpose in violation of the OSCE principles and commitments set forth in the Helsinki Final Act and the OSCE documents and decisions. We expect ODIHR and its Director to address this issue.

In conclusion, we wish Director M.Link every success in his future endeavors.

I thank you, Mr. Chairperson.