

Parallel OSCE Civil Society Conference

28-29 November 2010

Astana, Kazakhstan

Outcome Document¹

Preamble

1. We, civil society representatives from across the OSCE region, have come together at the Parallel OSCE Civil Society Conference in Astana, Kazakhstan, on November 28-29, to reaffirm our strong belief in and commitment to the Helsinki Process, and our determination to contribute towards fully realizing the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law that are at the core of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security.

2. We underscore and reaffirm the role of the human dimension as a key element of comprehensive security in the OSCE region. We believe in the common responsibility of all OSCE participating States to ensure the implementation of human dimension commitments in the entire OSCE region in accordance to the principle articulated in the 1991 Moscow document where the OSCE participating States "categorically and irrevocably" declared that the "commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension of the OSCE are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned" and recognized that "the active involvement of persons, groups, organizations and institutions is essential to ensure continuing progress in this direction."

3. We recognize that solidarity among and between civil society throughout the participating States is needed now more than ever, in the light of continuing challenges to the full realization of human

¹ This Outcome Document was prepared by the International Organizational Committee of the Parallel OSCE Civil Society Conference, held on 28-29 November 2010 in Astana, Kazakhstan with the input of many experts from various countries, and was expanded, finalized and adopted by civil society representatives at the Parallel Conference. The International Organizational Committee is composed of the following organizations and individual experts: Andrey Aranbaev, Independent Expert (Turkmenistan), Center for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights (Russia), Center for National and International Studies (Azerbaijan), Citizens Against Corruption (Kyrgyzstan), CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation (international), Expert Working Group (Uzbekistan), Freedom House (international), Human Rights Watch (international), International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law (Kazakhstan), International Civil Initiative for the OSCE (international), FIDH-International Federation for Human Rights, International Youth Human Rights Movement (international), Kalym Shamy (Kyrgyzstan), Moscow Helsinki Group (Russia), National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (USA), Netherlands Helsinki Committee (the Netherlands), Norwegian Helsinki Committee (Norway), NotaBene (Tajikistan), Viasna Human Rights Center (Belarus), Vladimir Shkolnikov, independent observer, World Movement for Democracy (international).

dimension commitment in many, if not all, OSCE participating States, and in particular of systematic and persistent human rights problems in the majority of post-Soviet countries.

4. We underscore the value of the OSCE for regional civil society and welcome the 2010 Astana Summit as an important opportunity to start a process of strengthening, reviving and adapting the institution to address contemporary challenges to security and cooperation in the region.

5. In a spirit of goodwill, we offer these recommendations to the 2010 OSCE Summit participants and to all OSCE institutions as a contribution from independent civil society organizations to the OSCE bodies and participating States.

I. Values and Principles

6. We, civil society representatives from across the OSCE region, reaffirm the fundamental importance of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act of the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe and its Declaration on Principles Guiding Relations between participating States, which declared that (Principle VII) “the participating States will respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion” and that (Principle X) “the participating States will fulfill in good faith their obligations under international law, both those obligations arising from the generally recognized principles and rules of international law and those obligations arising from treaties or other agreements, in conformity with international law, to which they are parties”.

7. We recall the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe, which recognized that “Human rights and fundamental freedoms are the birthright of all human beings, are inalienable and are guaranteed by law. Their protection and promotion is the first responsibility of government. Respect for them is an essential safeguard against an over mighty State. Their observance and full exercise are the foundation of freedom, justice and peace”. The Charter affirmed that “democratic government is based on the will of the people, expressed regularly through free and fair elections. Democracy has as its foundation respect for the human person and the rule of law. Democracy is the best safeguard of freedom of expression, tolerance of all groups of society, and equality of opportunity for each person. (...) Democracy, with its representative and pluralist character, entails accountability to the electorate, the obligation of public authorities to comply with the law and justice administered impartially. No one will be above the law.”

In the same spirit, the 1999 Istanbul summit reaffirmed “that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law is at the core of the OSCE’s comprehensive concept of security”.

8. We further recall the commitments made in the 1990 Copenhagen Document, stating that
(9.1) Everyone will have the right to freedom of expression including the right to communication.
(9.2) Everyone will have the right of peaceful assembly and demonstration.
(9.3) The right of association will be guaranteed.

(9.4) Everyone will have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

9. We underscore and reaffirm the role of the human dimension as a core of comprehensive security in the OSCE region. We believe in the common responsibility of all OSCE participating States to ensure the implementation of human dimension commitments in the entire OSCE region in accordance with the principle articulated in the 1991 Moscow document where the OSCE participating States stated “that issues relating to human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law are of international concern, as respect for these rights and freedoms constitutes one of the foundations of the international order. They categorically and irrevocably declare that the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension of the OSCE are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned. They express their determination to fulfill all of their human dimension commitments and to resolve by peaceful means any related issue, individually and collectively, on the basis of mutual respect and co-operation. In this context they recognize that the active involvement of persons, groups, organizations and institutions is essential to ensure continuing progress in this direction.”

10. We applaud the OSCE for its significant achievements in advancing the human dimension over the past thirty five years. The establishment and respect for mechanisms for participation of civil society in OSCE’s human dimension deliberations has been a remarkable and unique achievement in the sphere of multilateral governance. We commend the work done by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, the execution of election observation missions, increasing recognition of the security of human rights defenders as an institutional priority, development of the guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, guidelines for legislation of reducing hate crimes, the ongoing process of developing a Guidebook on Freedom of Association and the monitoring of trials. We highlight the important preventative work of the High Commissioner on National Minorities with respect to many situations in which a potential for violent conflict existed.

11. Despite many important achievements, we register our strong disappointment at the inability of the OSCE structures to effectively address ongoing and evolving threats to human security and decreasing implementation of human dimension commitments by many participating states. The lack of realization by some participating States of even the most fundamental basic principles enshrined in the Helsinki Accords, Charter of Paris and Copenhagen and Moscow Documents has been especially evident in the past decade. Shrinking space for civil society to operate freely, an obvious erosion of human rights, continued pressure on and persecution of human rights defenders, and the inability of participating States and the entire organization to effectively respond to violent crises and to resolve protracted conflicts – all this calls for a need for the OSCE to unequivocally reaffirm its fundamental values and principles and move forward to build strong capacity to respond to new challenges.

12. In the light of these challenges, we welcome the 2010 OSCE Summit in Astana, Kazakhstan, which is held for the first time in more than 10 years and for the first time ever on the post-Soviet soil. We believe that this Summit is a unique opportunity to revive and reinvigorate the organization and we strongly believe that civil society has a unique and important role in shaping the outcomes of the Summit. The future strengthening and realization of potential of the OSCE relies on active involvement and larger space for civil society.

13. We therefore declare our resolve to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms to strengthen peace, security, cooperation and democracy in the OSCE region, by providing recommendations to the OSCE and the participating States in the four following areas:

- strengthening of the implementation of the human dimension as a core principle of comprehensive security;
- strengthening operational functions of the OSCE, including its relationship with civil society;
- increasing effectiveness of the OSCE in responding to political and humanitarian crises;
- addressing urgent problems of human rights in the post-Soviet region, including the Central Asia region.

II. Strengthening of the Implementation of the Human Dimension as a Core Principle of Comprehensive Security

Strengthening Institutions to more Effectively Implement the Human Dimension

14. We call upon the OSCE Participating States to take measures to:

- strengthen efforts to implement measures to fully realize their commitments within the field of human dimension;
- strengthen existing mechanisms for monitoring how OSCE participating States implement their human dimension commitments, as well as mechanisms for rapidly reacting to egregious violations of commitments;
- strengthen utilization of reports, findings and recommendations adopted by and submitted to other multi-lateral institutions including the United Nations Human Rights Council, United Nations treaty bodies, Council of Europe and other regional and international organizations;
- expand participation of civil society in discussions of actions taken by the OSCE participating States with regard to human dimension, as well as to the other two dimensions of comprehensive security;
- develop a mechanism for non-governmental organizations to participate in sessions of the OSCE Permanent Council and the Human Dimension Committee and to, in the context of these fora, propose recommendations to the Organization's participating States in the field of human dimension;
- introduce an official review mechanism to assess participating States for a potential Chairmanship role. This mechanism would assess the participating state's implementation of its OSCE human dimension commitments and would be carried out before any decision on the matter of future Chairmanship is made;
- select heads of OSCE Field Presences from the ranks of high-level diplomats who have experience in the human dimension area.

15. We call upon the OSCE institutions to:

- review OSCE documents related to the human dimension and make proposals to the participating States on strengthening the corresponding documents and adopting new ones that would respond to the new

challenges, particularly in the field of freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of expression, a right for to fair trials, freedom of movement, prohibition of torture and protection of human rights defenders;

- consult with civil society prior to developing programmatic and project activities; build into the programs regular impact evaluations with the substantive input of civil society; involve civil society into the implementation of programmatic activities to the maximum possible extent;

- meet with civil society representatives during each visit of high-level officials from the OSCE institutions to the OSCE participating States;

- call on all participating States to abolish the death penalty.

16. As civil society representatives, we commit to strengthen our capacity to:

- perform regular analysis of how the OSCE participating States implement their commitments in the field of human dimension;

- present proposals and recommendations on updating the OSCE documents and developing new ones in the field of human dimension;

- maintaining the independence of, and strengthening engagement with and oversight of, the OSCE field operations and institutions, including regular evaluations of OSCE activities in the field.

Freedom of expression

17. We reiterate the concern raised by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media regarding lack of pluralism in the media as well as the continued criminalization of libel and insult and the massive civil defamation fines designed to put media outlets out of business.

18. We are very concerned about growing tendency of using the legitimate goal of fighting terrorism as a pretext for laws that seek to curb legitimate speech, as well as abuse of 'anti-extremism' legislation. This practice must be stopped.

19. Participating States must do more to protect journalists and civic and political activists from physical attacks, harassment and intimidation, stop impunity for such crimes, conduct effective investigation and bring the perpetrators to justice.

20. Proceedings against bloggers or journalists motivated on political grounds should cease, including persecution through biased and unfair trials on ordinary criminal charges and under falsified charges.

21. We call upon the OSCE participating States to update the OSCE commitments to reflect new trends and challenges, and in particular protect freedom of expression on the Internet.

22. OSCE should play a more active role in the promotion and protection of freedom of expression, including:

- increasing interaction of the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media with civil society, including jointly monitoring situations with regards to freedom of expression across the OSCE region;

- conduct educational programs and trainings in universities and with journalists;
- support and train civil society organizations that work in media independence and freedom of expression.

23. Participating States should provide independent media with unimpeded access to television and radio frequencies and licenses.

24. Participating States should abolish limitations on international media activities and presence in the country.

25. All OSCE participating States should decriminalize “libel”, “defamation”, and other forms of expression; and ensure that the fines for “libel” and “defamation” in civil and administrative trials are not as high as to put media outlets out of business or bankrupt journalists and activists.

Freedom of association

26. Participating States should increase the time allocated to discussions of freedoms of association and assembly as well as to the situation of human rights defenders during regular OSCE Human Dimension Meetings and to dedicate at least one of the Supplementary Human Dimension meetings every year to one of these topics.

27. OSCE participating States should conform to their commitments in the 1991 Copenhagen document, section 10.3, to "ensure that individuals are permitted to exercise the right to association, including the right to form, join and participate effectively in non-governmental organizations which seek the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including trade unions and human rights monitoring groups."

28. We endorse the development of Guidelines on freedom of association by the ODIHR detailing the meaning of this commitment, and call for strengthening its capacity to provide legislative support to participating States, translate into national languages, and to monitor its implementation, including implementation of freedom of activity of informal groups.

29. States should ensure their legislation regulating the activities of NGOs is in conformity with OSCE and other international commitments. They should ensure that legal regulations governing NGO activities are non-discriminatory and do not allow for government interference in NGO activities. Financial or administrative reporting or oversight procedures should be reasonable and not designed or used to obstruct NGO activities. The principle of non-discrimination should also mean that no additional restrictions are imposed on the operation of international non-governmental organizations in any given country, or on co-operation of domestic NGOs with international or foreign NGOs and inter-governmental organizations.

30. OSCE/ODIHR should establish a panel of experts on freedom of association consisting of civil society representatives, similar to its panel of experts on freedom of assembly.

31. We encourage the OSCE to endorse and promote the application of the 2007 Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the Legal Status of NGOs.

Freedom of Assembly

32. The OSCE/ODIHR Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly should be translated into all national languages and implemented by all OSCE participating States. States should ensure that authorities, including local and police authorities, are aware of the requirements of this document. The OSCE/ODIHR should continue its training and monitoring activities with regard to freedom of assembly.

33. Participating States should train the police to adopt a human rights approach to policing assemblies, including, inter alia, avoiding using violence against participants of the assemblies and stop detaining and bringing charges of disorder to individuals for the mere fact of their participation in an assembly that had not been “sanctioned” by the authorities unless these individuals were personally involved in disruption of the peace, as ruled by the European Court on Human Rights.

34. Participating States should ensure the provision of security and safety to participants of peaceful assemblies, including against counter-demonstrations, even if authorities and majority of the public disagree with or are irritated by their message.

35. Participating States should review their domestic legislation on freedom of assembly for compliance with the OSCE guidelines.

Human Rights Defenders

36. OSCE participating States should implement their commitment enshrined in the 1991 Copenhagen document, section 10, to ensure effectively the rights of the individual to know and act upon human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to contribute actively, individually or in association with others, to their promotion and protection.

37. The OSCE participating States should take concrete steps to implement this commitment. Such measures should include:

- endorsing and promoting application of the European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders or drawing up similar guidelines of the OSCE, and undertaking to apply them, whenever appropriate, in individual and joint actions;

- elevating OSCE’s work on Human Rights Defenders beyond the ODIHR Focal Point by creating an institution of the OSCE Representative on Human Rights Defenders, similar to the institution of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media;

- strengthening the OSCE capacity for rapid response in cases when human rights defenders are in danger, urgently in need of assistance and in cases where their situation must be raised at the highest governmental level;

- stepping up cooperation among the participating States for the purpose of promoting independence of lawyers, judges, prosecutors and law enforcement authorities across the OSCE region;

- participating States should release all persons unjustly imprisoned for political reasons, starting with Evgeniy Zhovtis (Kazakhstan), Azimzhan Askarov (Kyrgyzstan), Aleksey Sokolov (Russia), Nikol Pashinyan (Armenia), Ramzan Esergepov (Kazakhstan) and Eynulla Fatullaev (Azerbaijan), and Alisher Karamatov, Jamshid Karimov, Norboi Kholjigitov and Dilmurod Saidov of Uzbekistan.

Freedom of Movement and Visa Regulations

38. In line with the spirit and commitments of the 1975 Helsinki agreements, participating States should ensure a progressive liberalization of visa regulations of participating States, in particular so as to enable active involvement of persons, groups, organizations and institutions from across the OSCE states in fulfilling the human dimension commitments and in furthering conflict resolution.

39. OSCE participating States should not prevent human rights defenders from conducting fact-finding missions, attending meetings and engaging in other activities relevant to their human rights work in other OSCE participating States.

40. The OSCE and OSCE participating States should analyze how other international and regional agreements, such as the Minsk Convention (1993), affect the OSCE commitments on freedom of movement, and revise them if they contradict or come into conflict with the OSCE commitments.

41. OSCE should hold a Supplementary Human Dimension Conference on Freedom of Movement in 2011 in the region, to discuss, inter alia, transparency of government policies and actions in the area of freedom of movement and the use of “blacklists” and bans on travel.

Election observation

42. We call upon the OSCE to develop clearer, precise, differentiated criteria for assessment of elections, to be better understood by the general public.

43. OSCE criteria of free and fair elections should be expanded to include, inter alia:

- whether the courts accept and review complaints about alleged violations during the previous election cycle, and whether the governments have implemented the court decisions on such complaints;

- attention to be given not only to the electoral campaign and election procedures, but also to the situation of civil and political rights as well as instances of intimidation and discrimination of election participants over the course of the pre-election year;

44. OSCE participating States should refrain from congratulating the winner of the elections until the OSCE issues its Final Narrative Report.

45. OSCE should ensure active participation of civil society representatives in its election monitoring missions, ensure ability of civil society institutions to conduct their own independent monitoring of elections as well as to conduct assessment of OSCE's monitoring of the elections.

46. Conclusion of monitoring observations by the various organs of the OSCE should be issued separately, and separate from the statements by observation missions of other organizations.

Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Combating Terrorism

47. Participating States should ensure compliance with international and national human rights obligations in the context of combating terrorism.

48. The OSCE should establish a working group to monitor protection of human rights in the context of counterterrorism measures that would evaluate compliance of relevant counterterrorism laws and practices with international human rights norms.

49. Participating States should apply the principle of presumption of innocence to those suspected of terrorism or 'extremism', especially when reviewing requests for the extradition of asylum seekers.

50. When reviewing extradition requests the OSCE participating States should be guided by rulings of the European Court of Human Rights banning the return of individuals to countries where they face a risk of torture.

51. When determining whether to grant extradition or other requests for rendition, participating States should not use diplomatic assurances of non-use of torture and guarantees of fair trial because they have proved to be an ineffective safeguard against torture.

Human Rights and Extractive Industries

52. The OSCE should recognize the linkages between human rights violations and extractive industries, and:

- recognize the important linkages between fiscal transparency and human rights, in particular, the right to information and taking part in public affairs;

- encourage participating States practice fiscal transparency and accountability in all areas of the economy, including the hydrocarbon sector;

- endorse the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) - a revenue transparency standard in the oil, gas and mining sectors that provides for regular public disclosure of payments by extractive industries to governments and reconciliation against recorded receipt of those funds by governments.

III. Strengthening Operational Functions of the OSCE, Including Its Relationship with Civil Society

Chairman-in-Office

53. The OSCE should make better use of the role of the Chairman-in-Office. The Chairman-in-Office should:

- further encourage participating States to make use of the assistance offered by the OSCE institutions;
- in serious cases of alleged non-implementation of human dimension commitments the Chairman-in-Office should dispatch high-level special envoys chosen from among eminent personalities with high international standing, and task ODIHR to prepare a public report on the alleged serious violations with a view to presenting it in the Permanent Council. The Chairmanship delegation to the OSCE should meet regularly with representatives of civil society, especially during their visits to the OSCE participating States.

Civil Society

54. Civil Society should be more actively engaged by the OSCE and its role should be strengthened by:

- encouraging participation of representatives of Field Offices, ODIHR and delegations of participating States in civil society coordination meetings prior to NGO participation in the OSCE meetings;
- establishing expert groups at ODIHR on fundamental rights topics (modeled after the Panel of Experts on Freedom of Assembly) with involvement of academics as well as practitioners from civil society groups throughout the region;
- considering setting up, under the aegis of the Chairmanship or other OSCE institutions, a Civil Society Advisory Board of prominent public figures and leading international NGOs working on the OSCE issues;
- setting up educational programs for human rights defenders and NGOs on how to use OSCE instruments more effectively.

Field Presences

55. The capacity and profile of Field Presences should be increased by:

- regularly holding public meetings with representatives of local and regional civil society to discuss possibilities of their engagement in the activities of the field presences and of the OSCE in general;
- regularly briefing civil society on the entire range of the activities and requesting feedback, including formal evaluations, of the OSCE field activities;

- institutionalize mechanisms for civil society's monitoring of and feedback on the situation in the country, and of the OSCE field activities, especially on projects aimed at building the capacity of law enforcement agencies and other government agencies;
- make publically available information gathered by the Field Offices on the human rights situation in the country, and maintain transparency in their activities;
- Field Offices should maintain independence in engagement with host governments.

General Public

56. Awareness-raising and engagement of the general public should be enhanced by:

- increasing the level of awareness of OSCE standards and OSCE products (guidelines, legal opinions, handbooks) by increasing outreach to civil society, including meetings with civil society by OSCE officials from institutions developing these products;
- developing educational modules about OSCE standards and institutions, including both historical and current perspectives;
- considering to support study tours to ODIHR and other OSCE structures for students of law and international relations from the OSCE participating States.

Geographical Representation

57. Measures to improve geographical representation and balance should include:

- holding Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings and major conferences outside Vienna or Warsaw with a view to raising the Organization's public profile and ownership;
- improving geographical balance and representation of fluent speakers of OSCE languages, especially Russian, among the OSCE staff, first of all in institutions focusing on Human Dimension.

Cooperation with other International Structures

58. The OSCE should strengthen cooperation with other international structures, including by:

- strengthening significantly cooperation with other regional intergovernmental organizations, notably the Council of Europe and the Venice Commission;
- establishing operational links with the UN Human Rights Council and its special procedures, notably the Special Rapporteurs on Human Rights Defenders, on Freedom of Expression, and on Freedom of Assembly and Association.

OSCE Institutions

59. The scope and quality of the OSCE work should be preserved and enhanced by, inter alia:

- increasing the number of positions for which personnel is contracted through an open procedure rather than by secondment;
- calling upon Participating States to maintain and increase the level of their financial contributions to the OSCE.

IV. Increasing Effectiveness of the OSCE in Preventing and Responding to Political and Humanitarian Crises

Fighting Intolerance and Discrimination

60. Intolerance, discrimination, extremism and hatred on ethnic, racial, religious, gender, disability and other grounds may sow the seeds of conflict and violence on a wider scale. OSCE commitments on promoting tolerance and non-discrimination should be upheld by the participating States.

Fight against Transnational Criminality

61. Trafficking in human beings, drugs and weapons by transnational criminal networks constitute three main transnational criminal threats. They undermine security of citizens, the capacity of the state to provide good governance and the rule of law, and contribute to violence in society. Criminal interference in politics can undermine the very legitimacy of the state. The OSCE participating States should therefore provide a firm response to fighting transnational criminality, each State individually and in cooperation, with respect and adherence to the rule of law.

62. Fight against corruption and increasing transparency should be strengthened by the following measures:

- participating States should strengthen legislation in the sphere of the fight against corruption and money laundering;
- OSCE should strengthen monitoring of money laundering and publically report government budgets on an annual basis based on the transparency index of participating States;
- OSCE and participating States should provide support to initiatives directed at strengthening fiscal transparency.

63. Participating States should ensure protection to, rather than punish, victims of trafficking in human beings.

Minority Rights

64. Respect for minority rights is a key for the prevention of violent conflict. Irrespective of the state which people live in, they should have the right to use their native language in the daily life. Irrespective of their ethnic background, individuals must be guaranteed the right to live in the places they originate from, to continue to live there and to earn a livelihood. To protect and promote the rights of minorities:

- the work of the High Commissioner on National Minorities should be upheld and strengthened;
- the Bolzano/Bozen recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations should be endorsed and applied by the participating States. These recommendations show how states can support minorities abroad in cooperation with states of residence without appearing threatening and allaying traditional fears associated with their involvement.

Response to Early Warnings and to Erupting Crises

65. The OSCE should strengthen its ability to respond to early warnings and escalation of crises through:

- active involvement of civil society;
- strengthening the work and capacity of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre;
- enhance the work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in assisting and monitoring in situations of violent conflict or the threat of violent conflict;
- increasing civilian observer capacity in response to early warnings by the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Conflict Prevention Centre;
- ensuring that investigations and policy-preparation for swift action in situations of persistent, large-scale human rights abuse or of imminent threat of such violations are not held up by a veto of any one participating State;
- develop mechanisms of rapid response to crises, taking into consideration, inter alia, lessons learned from the past application of the Moscow mechanism by which 10 participating States can initiate a report in a situation of large-scale human rights abuses or imminent threat thereof in any of the participating States.

V. Addressing Urgent Problems of Human Rights in the Post-Soviet Region, Including in the Central Asia Region

66. We recognize the unique role of the OSCE in Central Asia, as the only multi-lateral regional inter-governmental body in this region with a mandate to protect human security and promote respect for

human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law. In the light of this unique role, the alarming situation with respect to human rights in the region, and of the fact that the 2010 Astana Summit is the first OSCE summit to be held in the post-Soviet state and in particular on the Central Asian soil, special attention is merited for this region.

67. A number of severe, alarming and persistent problems in human rights observance are relevant for many countries in the post-Soviet region, but must be especially noted for the Central Asian region:

- severe violations of fundamental human rights, including violations of rights of persons belonging to national minorities, have in many cases contributed to or been at the core of violent conflicts and instability;
- severe restrictions on freedom of expression, resulting in a lack of credible information on situations on the ground, impede participating States from reacting to emerging instability in a timely and measured manner;
- persecution of human rights defenders weakens the capacity of participating States to address severe human rights violations and thus weaken the security of the region;
- justice systems are often dependent on the executive authorities, and are used arbitrarily as a tool to suppress political opponents, civic activists and economic competition;
- independent civil society is suppressed by laws or practices through restrictions on freedom of association, freedom of assembly, freedom of association and freedom of travel;
- there are alarmingly large and growing numbers of prisoners of conscience and political prisoners, and cases of enforced disappearances;
- absence of political pluralism and rise of authoritarian regimes has increased corruption, led to absence of free and fair elections, and eroded democratic values in the region.

68. We, representatives of civil society across the OSCE region:

- welcome the increased attention to Central Asia, including the increased frequency of visits by the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the ODIHR Director, and the OSCE Representative on the Freedom of the Media to the Central Asian region;
- regret the lack of will by the authorities of Kyrgyzstan to accept the OSCE Police Advisory Group in a timely manner; yet welcome the launching of the Community Security Initiative;
- are alarmed by the continuing repression against human rights defenders and the degradation of human rights and civil liberties in the region, weakening the capacity of Central Asian States to respond to stop human rights violations, therefore weakening the stability and security of individual States and the region as a whole.

69. We call upon the OSCE participating States to:

- strengthen the mandate of Field Operations in the region, enabling them to monitor and report on human dimension developments in a timely manner;
- speak out clearly on human dimension problems in the Central Asian region;
- appoint experienced diplomats with experience in human dimension issues to head the OSCE Field Operations in Central Asia;
- encourage the Central Asian States to accept assistance by the OSCE institutions in implementation of the OSCE commitments;
- mandate the ODIHR to present to the OSCE Permanent Council a special report on freedoms of expression, assembly, association and movement in Central Asian States;
- hold regular meetings of the Permanent Council with the participation of the civil society to discuss the situation in Central Asia;
- engage in public dialogue with participating Central Asian States about the fate of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, and cases of enforced disappearance;
- conduct monitoring of trials perceived to have a political character or where pressure may be applied on the lawyers, judges, and the persecuted, in particular, the trials on the April and June events in Kyrgyzstan;
- strengthen cooperation between Field Operations and local civil society in the Central Asian region;
- encourage the participating Central Asian States to engage constructively with international and local independent human rights, humanitarian and environmental NGOs.

70. Participating States should allow international non-governmental organizations and media organizations to register and operate freely without obstruction, intimidation or harassment.