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## **“Making the human rights system more effective”**

### **Intervention during the Ministerial Spring meeting of the Council of Europe**

**Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights**

Strasbourg, 7 May 2008

One standing priority of the Committee of Ministers is *to consolidate and further strengthen the Council of Europe system of human rights protection*. The incoming chair of Sweden has restated that priority.

This is important.

Of course, Europe has treaties and protection mechanisms which are seen as models for the rest of the world, not least this year when the 60 th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is observed.

But the system can be further improved.

Steps are needed to allow the Court to operate with more focus on the real priorities and to promote information on its procedures so that clearly inadmissible cases are not flowing in.

Steps are needed to ensure that its judgments are fully executed.

My office can be an important supplement to the Court and contribute to the development we all aim for – that human rights problems as much as possible are resolved at *national* level.

We should seek to advise on good models and experiences from other countries.

We should seek regular dialogue with each country, with the government and with the civil society groups. This dialogue should be based on solid facts and be free from any prejudice. I believe such dialogue pays off. Let me acknowledge here the constructive spirit in which member states have engaged with my office.

When having a dialogue with governments my office should also ensure coordination with other human rights actors. With the different bodies inside the Council of Europe. With the UN. With the OSCE. And with the EU – including the established Fundamental Rights Agency.

Clearly, there is scope for increased complementarity in our respective actions to improve their impact.

We are going in that direction now, we build on one another's work - but the coordination and collaboration could be further strengthened.

One area to develop is the cooperation between the monitoring bodies and the technical assistance activities – the programmes to support the reforms.

Let me be frank. I am skeptical towards proposals about creating new human rights mechanisms. The focus should now be towards making those we already have to function as effectively as possible.

Most of the new issues which come up could in fact be efficiently tackled and dealt with by the existing structures.

Making the mechanisms more effective and promote the coordination between them – that is what is needed. That is also the case on national level.

The conference on “systematic work for implementation of human rights” in Stockholm 6-7 November will address precisely that. The idea is to recognise that realisation of human rights requires a strategic, systematic approach – involving various institutions and authorities on local, regional and national level, all working together towards the same goal.

This in turn requires some comprehensive planning – which should be open also to voices from civil society and non-governmental organisations.

Human Rights are not only about stating good intentions. Their realisation requires a stubborn, systematic work of changing both attitudes and how the judicial, law enforcement, social, administrative and political administrations functions in real life.