

Speech: Joint OSCE Statement on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

I have the honor to make this statement on behalf of the following 44 participating States: Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America and my own country, Denmark.

We make this statement in the same week where we celebrate the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; a collective commitment to recognize and protect the equal dignity, freedom and rights of every human being.

Nearly seven decades later, we deeply regret that we are witnessing a continuing deterioration in some participating States in the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, all of which are essential to the realization of comprehensive security. At the same time, we regret that the participating States were unable to reach consensus on draft decisions addressing these challenges.

As highlighted in the Vienna Declaration adopted by the OSCE Parallel Civil Society Conference, the fight against terrorism and violent extremism must go hand in hand with the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

However, in certain parts of the OSCE region, the space for civil society is rapidly shrinking, both online and offline, and attacks on human rights defenders continue to increase. There are attempts to silence civil society, human rights defenders and free and pluralistic media through restrictive legislation, intimidations, or even violent acts and murder for which those responsible go unpunished. Women and girls continue to face discrimination and violence, and LGBTI persons experience hate crimes and violent ill-treatment.

These policies and practices not only violate or abuse human rights and fundamental freedoms, they are also often counter-productive, as they increase mutual suspicion in society, undermine trust in the rule of law and marginalize vulnerable communities.

For these reasons, we speak out when human rights and fundamental freedoms are violated or abused. Whether it is human rights defenders facing reprisals for their actions, or persons being harassed, bullied or attacked because of who they are, whom they love or what they believe or say. We will challenge harmful stereotypes, combat myths with facts, and speak out against discrimination on all grounds. We recall our commitments and hold ourselves

and each other to account. There may be times where we cannot prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.

We commend all individuals and organizations who work tirelessly to safeguard our commitments on human rights and hold governments accountable for their actions. They deserve our recognition and deepest respect. Our defense of and support for Human Right Defenders and civil society are not simply a matter of principle.

When people can freely exercise their human rights, fundamental freedoms and civil society thrives, and minorities are not marginalized, societies are more resilient and peaceful. When women and girls can pursue unlimited opportunities, a country realizes its full potential. When free and pluralistic media can inform the public, abuses of power, corruption and disinformation are uncovered.

We commend the work of the OSCE autonomous institutions, ODIHR, the HCNM and the RFOM, for their efforts to stand up for human rights, thereby contributing to our common security. Their work, mandates and institutional independence are essential to the promotion and protection of fundamental freedoms and human rights.

We will continue to take forward the principles that underpin the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the international covenants and the Helsinki Final Act and stand up for human rights, across the OSCE region, and worldwide.

Finally, we also would like to express our sincere appreciation and thanks to the Austrian Chairmanship for its tireless efforts to strengthen the Human Dimension.

[News story: The AAIB is sending a team to Overbury, Worcestershire](#)

[unable to retrieve full-text content]The AAIB is sending a team to Overbury, Worcestershire to investigate an accident to a light aircraft.

[News story: Revised arrangements for](#)

GCSE computer science

Ofqual has today (8 January 2018) [announced that non-exam assessment will not count to the final 9 to 1 grade in GCSE computer science in 2018 or 2019](#). It is, however, still an important part of the course and contributes to student learning and progress, so all schools must continue to give students the opportunity within the timetable to complete the tasks.

We made the decision after analysing more than 2,500 responses to our consultation, which was launched given evidence that some of this year's tasks had been posted to online forums and collaborative programming sites, contrary to exam board rules. It is not possible to identify which students have accessed or used this information.

More than two thirds of respondents (70%) agreed that the qualification's non-exam assessment had shortcomings and most (75%) thought changes should be made. However, views on what action we should take were mixed, with no consensus either for or against our preferred option. We have today published our analysis of the consultation responses alongside our decision.

While we know that not everyone will agree with our decision, students will all have an equal chance to show their knowledge and skills in the exams. If we did not make this change and the results this summer were felt to be unfair because of undetected rule breaches, we would not be able to address the issue.

Sally Collier, Ofqual Chief Executive, said: "We are pleased that so many teachers and students took the time to respond to our consultation. A clear majority of respondents agree that there are currently shortcomings with the non-exam assessment that could unfairly advantage some students.

"While the tasks themselves will no longer contribute to students' grades, we strongly believe that learning about a high-level programming language and having the opportunity to show how it can be used to solve problems is hugely important. We believe these changes will make the qualification as fair as it can be for all students."

Editors' notes

We have not decided on the assessment arrangements for the qualification that will apply to students taking their exams from 2020 onwards. While we understand that teachers and exam boards need time to prepare for any longer-term changes we want to make sure we take the right decision for the future. We will take into account the ideas put forward during the consultation and consult on a preferred approach before we decide on arrangements for 2020 and beyond.

News story: Seeking disability sector champions for 2018

Are you a business leader? Are you passionate about accessibility? Do you want to encourage culture change within UK business? If your answer to these questions is yes, you could be one of the next Disability Sector Champions.

The Office for Disability Issues is seeking disability sector champions in 6 new sectors.

In February 2017, 11 sector champions were announced who are using their influential status as leaders in their sectors to drive improvements to the accessibility, and quality, of services and facilities in their sector.

However, while these champions have all made great progress on this agenda in their respective sectors, there is much more to do to provide equal opportunities and choice for disabled people across the whole of society.

So, we are issuing a call for business people to become sector champions initially for a year, in each of the following sectors:

- trains
- technology
- insurance
- fashion
- leisure – pubs, restaurants and so on
- arts and culture – for example, theatre, cinema, museums

It is our hope that these Champions will become a catalyst for change. We need champions who are ambitious, passionate and dynamic, with strong networks and the ability to reach out to a wide range of organisations and to create momentum for change.

We would be grateful for expressions of interest from people who are ready for this challenge, and would welcome the opportunity to work within their sector and beyond to deliver on these goals.

Express your interest

To express your interest, please download and complete the expressions of interest form:

ODT, 11.8KB

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Email the form to fulfilling.potential@dwp.gsi.gov.uk (Office for Disability Issues).

If you have any enquiries, please contact us at the email address above.

Completed expressions of interest are due back by midnight on Sunday 28 January 2018.

[News story: Director on the move](#)

David has been at the organisation for more than 9 years, having initially joined the then Highways Agency as Procurement Director, before becoming Executive Director for Procurement and Commercial activities in 2013. He has decided to take a new role with HS2 Limited.

Chief Executive Jim O'Sullivan said:

As a highly valued member of the Executive team David has taken the business through the significant changes from Highways Agency to Highways England and our subsequent growth and development.

He has steered the development of our supplier relationships and new contract forms which have enabled the delivery of the £15bn road investment strategy – the biggest investment in roads in a generation.

I would like to warmly thank David for all he has achieved during his tenure and wish him well for the future.

David said:

It has been a privilege and a pleasure to work for Highways England during a hugely important period for the company. For me personally the last nine years have been a time of huge change, learning and growth, I am very grateful for the fantastic opportunities and

support offered by friends and colleagues – thank you all. My decision to leave is a difficult one for me, but one taken for the right reasons in terms of my family and my career. I wish everyone here every success in the future as Highways England continues to grow and develop.

Interim arrangements are being put in place to lead Commercial and Procurement until a permanent successor is appointed.