

Consultative meeting between IHROBiH and civil society representatives held in Mostar

A consultative meeting with civil society organisations, organised by the Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was held on 5 May 2023.

The meeting served as the platform for a discussion about possible and sustainable concepts for providing mutual support and exchanging experiences between key stakeholders, but also as an opportunity for IHROBiH to get proposals and suggestions on how to strengthen the protection and exercise of human rights.

The atmosphere of the meeting was good and there were positive reactions of the participants to this IHROBiH initiative. The conclusion was that IHROBiH and CSOs should and must be supportive of each other in their work, given that they have similar missions and should jointly act in the interest of citizens.

**LIST OF NGO PARTICIPANTS ATTENDING MEETING HELD IN MOSTAR ON 5
MAY 2023**

- 1.** Association “Father” (Otac) Mostar
- 2.** Association for Entrepreneurship and Business “LINK” Mostar
- 3.** OSCE – Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
- 4.** Croatian Cultural Society “Progress” (Napredak) Mostar
- 5.** Association for Down Syndrome Mostar
- 6.** Association “Happy Smile” (Vedri osmijeh) Mostar
- 7.** Centre for Psychological Support “Sensus” Mostar
- 8.** Nansen Dialogue Center Mostar
- 9.** Association of Paraplegics and Polio Patients “Marko Ravlić” Mostar
- 10.** LDA – Local Democracy Agency Mostar
- 11.** Association “Your Rights BiH” (Vaša prava BiH) Mostar
- 12.** BH pride parades
- 13.** Youth Association “Rose Garden – Los Rosales” (Ružičnjak – Los Rosales) Mostar
- 14.** Association “Women of BiH” (Žene BiH) Mostar



Date: 5 May 2023

MINUTES

of consultative meeting between IHROBiH and CSOs in BiH held on 5 May 2023

On 5 May 2023, representatives of the Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina held a meeting with civil society organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina at A.B. Šimić Amphitheater at the Mostar University School of Philosophy (Campus 1) in Mostar, starting at 10.00 hrs.

The following attended the meeting:

- Ombudspersons of Bosnia and Herzegovina: Jasminka Džumhur, PhD, and Nives Jukić; assistant ombudspersons of BiH: Irma Hadžiavić, Alma Suljić, Antea Jozić, Emina Halilović, Vedrana Pavlović, Aleksandra Marin Diklić
- Communications and Cooperation Advisor Ivona Raznatović,
- Head of IHROBiH Office, Mahir Mulagić,
- List of CSO representatives attending enclosed to these minutes.

Agenda:

- Registration of participants and media statements
- Opening remarks: ombudspersons of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- IHROBiH role and position in protection and promotion of human rights; CSO and IHROBiH perspectives
- CSO role and position: IHROBiH and CSO perspectives
- Possible directions of future cooperation from CSO perspective
- Concluding remarks: ombudspersons of BiH

The ombudspersons of BiH opened the meeting with a moment of silence for the victims of the Belgrade unfortunate event.

Ombudswoman Nives Jukić emphasised the desire for this meeting to be as effective as possible for the benefit of all those attending, pointed to the promotional and protective roles of IHROBiH, and provided a thorough clarification for both roles in terms of experience exchange, causes of problems and assistance.

Ombudswoman Jasminka Džumhur expressed her regret over the absence of other invited participants as she hoped for a greater association turnout. She then apologised for Ombudsman Nevenko Vranješ's absence as he was prevented from attending the meeting. She pointed out that IHROBiH is a natural partner for CSOs and that strengthening the partnership with CSOs is extremely important. Then she informed those present about the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with Džemal Bijedić University and Mostar University for better cooperation and communication. She cited the importance of today's meeting for the mutual exchange of experiences and both weaknesses and strengths of IHROBiH. Furthermore, she said this was about

the willingness to cooperate and the need to face CSOs as they were the ones who pointed to our weaknesses.

The introductions by assistant ombudspersons followed the introductory address of the ombudspersons.

Mr Ivica Pavlović addressed the gathering on behalf of **Association of Paraplegics and Polio Patients**, who in turn stressed that for the 40 members of his association in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton immobility constituted a series of challenges, ranging from architectural barriers to public transportation. He also highlighted the lack of funds, which are mainly donations, but explained they were still trying to exercise their rights and hoped to establish positive cooperation with IHROBiH.

Ombudswoman Nives Jukić asked whether they, as an association, agreed to have the “Public transportation in HNC” case opened *ex officio* with IHROBiH. The Association agreed and IHROBiH then invited other association to address it with complaints or *ex officio* concerning specific issues.

Ombudswoman Jasminka Džumhur pointed out that this category of citizens was much broader and focused on mothers with children in strollers and elderly persons also affected by this problem.

Ms Danijela Kegelj addressed the gathering on behalf of **Association “Happy Smile” Mostar**, pointing out that she had a positive experience with IHROBiH. She especially thanked Assistant Ombudswoman Irma Hadživdić. She finds it necessary for people be get familiarised with the IHROBiH mandate because, as she points out, citizens do not make a distinction between basic terms related to human rights violations, they do not know about IHROBiH or they have misconceptions about how vulnerable human rights are. She also stresses she is a member of the working groups at BiH level working on developing a document which will be of assistance to persons with disabilities in identifying violations and will be adjusted to their language.

Mr Igor Ledić addressed the gathering on behalf of **Association for Down Syndrome Mostar** and in his presentation he pointed out that he was already familiar with IHROBiH competences and mandate. He points out that in the past period he received an IHROBiH recommendation. However, the court proceedings conducted to establish discrimination based on disability lasted for five years. He highlights the issue of how much IHROBiH can influence the legislation, amendments and involvement in the adoption of laws. He also stressed his disappointment with the fact that during the adoption of laws relating to persons with disabilities (Act on Depriving Persons with Disabilities of Legal Capacity) no associations were contacted during the drafting process. He informs those attending about the initiative on disability cards and finds it necessary to invite IHROBiH Mostar Regional Office representatives to a round table.

Ombudswoman Jasminka Džumhur points out that our society has until today not changed the awareness of cooperation with IHROBiH because there is repression and recommendations are not binding and therefore there are no sanctions. She pointed out that IHROBiH issued a recommendation to the Parliament concerning the Act on Carers, which the competent Ministry failed to comply with.

Ombudswoman Nives Jukić points out and pleads with those attending to file complaints with IHROBiH which will be considered in a timely manner. She further stressed that unfortunately in BiH ignorance is still one of the major issues.

Friar Andrija Nikić spoke on behalf of Croatian Cultural Society "Progress". In his presentation, he states that the Franciscans have been in BiH for over 800 years and that biggest problem was to find out what hurts and then a cure can be found.

Ms Jasna Rebac addressed the gathering on behalf of **Youth Association "Rose Garden- Los Rosales " Mostar** and in her presentation she expressed gratitude to IHROBiH for the previous and long-term cooperation. He believes that the problems of PWDs are at all levels of government. He highlights the issue with the HNC Action Plan, which has been adopted but not implemented. He also considers it necessary to appoint the PWD Committee, as initiated at Mostar City Council in November 2022.

Mr Ahmet Salčin addressed the gathering on behalf of **Association "Your Rights BiH"** and said they had good cooperation and experience with IHROBiH. He points out that he is very well aware of the fact that recommendations are not binding but that the recommendation in his favour is very significant as he uses it in court proceedings as evidence. He proposes joint activities to amend the Act.

Assistant Ombudswoman Emina Halilović emphasised IHROBiH importance and informed the attendees about its mandate and operations.

Emina Z. Pintarić and Delila Islamović addressed the gathering on behalf of **BH pride parades**. They highlighted a number of everyday problems of LGBT population in their presentation. They further state that the lengthiness of IHROBiH proceedings and believe that the parties often give up their complaints because of this. Since IHROBiH drafted the Special Report on the Rights of LGBT Persons back in 2016, they believe a new one needs to be drafted.

In her presentation, Assistant Ombudswoman Alma Suljić highlighted the importance of cooperation with non-governmental organisations and positive experiences because, as she points out, communication is key.

Dijana Tadić addressed the gathering on behalf of **Association "Women of BiH" safe house**. In her address, she points out that on several occasions she has referred women to IHROBiH and has had positive experiences. However, IHROBiH work is not recognised. She points out that most women are not aware of their rights and it is necessary to familiarise them with IHROBiH mandate.

Ombudswomen Jasminka Džumhur and Nives Jukić had the closing address.

Ombudswoman Nives Jukić said that in terms of the promotional and protective roles of IHROBiH she agreed with the participants who stated that IHROBiH is not visible enough but believed that the key is in the media and that in the future this should be worked on. However, she believes that IHROBiH has excellent cooperation in terms of its protective role and therefore invites all those attending to address it. She is grateful for the turnover, as well as both positive and negative criticism. It also proposes that a special body to work with children suffering peer violence be established.

Ombudswoman Jasminka Džumhur thanked for pointing to IHROBiH weaknesses. She pointed out that the vacant positions within IHROBiH have been filled and the lengthiness of the proceedings before IHROBiH is no longer an issue. She further states that IHROBiH instruments are visible on the official website, where there are also special reports indicating systemic violations of rights. She also points out that she is open to ideas on other topics for special reports and invites attendees to use IHROBiH annual reports to exercise their rights. She also invites the CSO participants to organise meetings that the ombudspersons will be happy to attend and invites them to look at the

Platform for Cooperation with Non-Governmental Organisations and the criteria on the IHROBiH website for better cooperation in the future.

Finally, the conclusion is that IHROBiH has excellent cooperation with CSOs but that this cooperation should be further encouraged, enhanced and made more visible by joint efforts. IHROBiH should hold such meetings with CSOs more often. IHROBiH is not sufficiently visible in the public space and it should work on the promotion and protection of human rights in BiH through even greater cooperation with CSOs, the media and through raising public awareness, thereby enhancing visibility, recognisability and importance of IHROBiH in society.

The atmosphere of the meeting was good and there were positive reactions of the participants to this IHROBiH initiative. The conclusion was that IHROBiH and CSOs should and must be supportive of each other in their work, given that they have similar missions and should jointly act in the interest of citizens.

Record made by:
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