

HDIM – UK NATIONAL STATEMENT

Tolerance and Non-Discrimination (National Minorities)

We align ourselves with the statement made by Netherlands on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, and would like to make a few national remarks.

Firstly we would like echo the previous speakers and pay tribute to the work of Astrid Thors in her previous position as High Commissioner on National Minorities, and to the staff in The Hague who continue to work on this very important issue during this period of uncertainty.

Our support for the work of the three OSCE autonomous institutions is no secret. Alongside ODIHR and the Representative on Freedom of the Media, the High Commissioner on National Minorities is part of the OSCE's toolkit of conflict prevention and human rights mechanisms, which together contribute to the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security.

Madam/Mr Moderator,

You asked us to consider the right of national minorities to access, disseminate, and exchange information in a mother tongue; and the role of the media in relation to peace and security as concerns national minorities.

As we set out last week, freedom of the media is an essential element of a stable and prosperous society. Being able to access information in a mother tongue allows national minorities to engage effectively in society,

to participate in the democratic development of their country and to fully exercise all their fundamental freedoms. We also welcome the decision to revise the guidelines on the use of national minority languages in the media, recognising the developments in that field.

However we also see a role for national minorities in relation to other aspects of the media. We have seen the benefits to wider society from positive role models from under-represented groups in high profile roles; be this in political life, sporting achievement, the arts or business. Journalism is no exception. National minorities have a role to play not only in relation to passively accessing information, but also providing it to others, through active engagement in public life and in journalism, in both minority and majority languages.

Do not underestimate the power of positive role models for the engagement of others in wider civil society.

Finally, you sensibly asked us for recommendations.

We have only one: that participating States work together, in the spirit of consensus, to agree upon a suitably qualified and able successor to Astrid Thors to take forward this important work without further delay.