



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
High Commissioner on National Minorities

STATEMENT

by
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to the
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[Check against delivery]

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Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today all our States are ethnically diverse. For reasons old or new, there is no single State within the OSCE area that is not, in fact, a multi-ethnic society. Thus interaction among individual persons of different ethnicities and efforts to build relations between ethnic communities are at the core of modern societies. When properly managed, diversity has proved to be a powerful driver of progress. However, our history and our present also abound with sobering examples of ethnic divides fuelling conflicts. The policies we pursue in this area today will impact our own and our children's futures, and getting them right should be a pressing concern for us all.

In almost 20 years of work in this area, my Institution has accumulated significant experience in dealing with inter-ethnic relations. While our experience has been built through working directly on national minority issues, specifically in countries and regions prone to conflict, I believe the lessons we have learned could have relevance and applicability in other contexts where different ethnic communities have to live together. It has been a long-term ambition of mine to collect this valuable experience together in a new set of guidelines on integration in diverse societies that would join our previous recommendations and guidelines for States seeking to successfully address inter-ethnic issues. Therefore, I am very happy to be able to announce that we will indeed be launching a set of guidelines in Ljubljana, Slovenia, this autumn, where I hope to see all of you. An invitation will be sent to your delegations in due course.

Integration has long been a buzzword in many circles. Governments, international bodies, academics and civil society have put a lot of work into developing policies and principles. There is no shortage of research material and policy documents on this issue, so you might well ask whether we really need to add to this literature. The recommendations of the High Commissioner are only relevant when they add value, and I sincerely believe we have a contribution to make in the field of integration. First of all, my aim is not to create any new standard or commitment to which the participating States should pledge their support. Existing norms for protection of human, including minority, rights form a sound basis upon which integration policies should be based. The principles of non-discrimination, equality

and respect for diversity are well-established and apply to all individuals and communities equally. The challenge is to find a careful balance between policies of integration and inclusion and those of recognition and accommodation of diversity. I want to assist participating States with finding this balance. I want to give you a toolkit, a statement of principles and a set of practical policy measures that have proved useful in certain contexts. I hope that some States will find many of the suggested policy measures helpful. Others will find that they have already implemented most of them or that they are not applicable to their specific situation. I am well aware of the political sensitivities attached to the debate about integration in many participating States, and I respect the fact that this topic can provoke powerful emotions. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to integration issues, and any effective policy has to take the local context into account. Despite differences between countries and regions, the notion that effective integration policies are a key element to maintain peace and stability in diverse societies holds true across the cases.

In dealing with tense, potential conflict situations involving national minorities, I and my predecessors have noted that a failed or weak integration policy is often a root cause of present instability. A cohesive society is a precondition for lasting stability and security, and this cannot be achieved without implementing an active process towards integration.

These days, the fabric of our societies is being tested by the economic crisis. I believe there is a risk that minorities could be disproportionately affected by the consequences of the economic downturn and austerity measures. In many countries, national minorities live compactly in rural or remote areas that are already economically underdeveloped, and any positive measures implemented in past years, such as earmarked funding for minority schools or dual-language municipalities, might prove hard to maintain as budget cuts take their toll. There is also a risk that economic hardship and increasing social unrest could benefit parties on the fringes of the political spectrum, fuelling virulent nationalism and xenophobia. Scarcity of financial resources will be unavoidable in the times ahead, but States should work hard to ensure that the economic downturn does not translate into social and inter-ethnic discord and unrest. Integration policies should also extend to economic opportunities.

Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The close link between integration and security is why I have been supporting the elaboration of integration policies in some participating States. In March I visited **Moldova**, where I had the opportunity to discuss a strategy for the integration of that society. In Moldova, I believe such a policy is vital to promote social cohesion and stability. Tackling the contentious and difficult questions of identity in such fields as language, education, media and participation that have had a divisive impact on Moldova's society would also contribute to a future settlement of the conflict over Transdnistria. I believe the Government's commitment to the introduction of a multilingual education system throughout the country is a significant step and one of the best ways to promote knowledge of the State language while upholding minority rights standards. Apart from providing expert advice, I also support these efforts through a project to train civil servants in the State language.

During my visit, I also met the new leadership in Tiraspol and discussed a wide range of topics, including the issue of the Latin-script schools. A practical solution needs to be found that will allow these schools to operate normally, which would not only respect human rights, but would also serve as a confidence-building measure between Chişinău and Tiraspol. As the facts on the ground about the actual situation of the schools remain unclear, I intend to investigate what obstacles the schools are facing and propose solutions. My office is already working on this in close co-operation with the OSCE Mission to Moldova. The resumption of the technical working group on education in the 5+2 framework is a welcome development, and I would be happy to support the working group with research and advice.

Since I last reported to you in November, I have made several visits to **Poland** and **Lithuania** to address minority issues affecting internal and bilateral political relations. In Lithuania, minority representatives have shared their concerns with me regarding changes to the education system and their ability to use minority languages in the public sphere. I have encouraged the Government of Lithuania to address the legal vacuum created by the lapse of the Law on Ethnic Minorities in 2010 and to ensure that the new Law on Education is implemented in consultation with national minorities and that it guarantees high-quality education in minority schools, including in mother-tongue education. In Poland, the

Lithuanian minority is particularly concerned about maintaining opportunities for education in their mother tongue, including adequate provision of textbooks in the Lithuanian language. I have encouraged the Government to address these concerns proactively. I have reminded the Governments of both Poland and Lithuania that protection and promotion of minority rights is, first and foremost, the responsibility of the State in which the minority resides. Decisions concerning national minorities should be guided by relevant international standards and should not refer to reciprocity. I believe both Poland and Lithuania would benefit from an enhanced dialogue on national minority issues.

Mr. Chairperson,
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I have been following with concern the way minority-related questions are being used and politicized in bilateral relations. While the *Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations* encourage positive support for ethnic-kin in other, often neighbouring, States, the recommendations also caution against using kinship as a tool in promoting domestic and foreign policy objectives. Throughout much of the OSCE area, we see a trend in what I would call **kin-State activism**, whereby States take measures, amend legislation and adopt policies to support a minority in a neighbouring State, usually on the basis of a shared ethnic belonging. As noted in the *Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations*, any State may have a legitimate interest in supporting minorities residing in other States based on shared ethnic, cultural, linguistic or other ties. It is, however, essential to pursue this interest in co-operation with the State of residence and with respect for the principle of friendly and good neighbourly relations. Otherwise, we may see an increase in inter-State tensions that affect co-operation on other issues and hamper regional integration. As a guiding principle, States should not be more interested in minorities residing in neighbouring States than those residing within their own borders.

Lately I have been much preoccupied with the situation surrounding the Vlach and Romanian communities in Serbia, which have affected **Romanian-Serbian relations**. My engagement on this issue has picked up significantly since March, when Romania requested my involvement. I visited Serbia in March and June and Romania in April and July. I also plan to host a dialogue with representatives of the two Governments as soon as the new Government

in Serbia has been formed. I have proposed that this dialogue be based on a document signed by the two countries in March and on the *Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations*. The signals I have received from the two parties are encouraging, and I welcome their readiness to co-operate in this process.

The situation in southern Serbia is still a cause for concern. The recent election campaign was accompanied by an upswing in inter-ethnic tensions. Given the regional context in which southern Serbia is situated, I believe it is crucial to address the wounds caused by past incidents in a thorough and transparent way and reduce the ethnic divisions. I intend to re-engage with the newly elected local authorities at the end of the summer, including on the new multilingual university department in Bujanovac.

In my last statement to the Permanent Council, I called for vigilance with regard to the situation in **Kosovo**. Since then, the situation has remained tense but has fortunately not deteriorated further on either side of the river Ibar. This is positive, and it should be ascribed in no small part to the fact that all parties exercised restraint during the election period. The OSCE should also not be shy of claiming some credit for its role in facilitating the election process in Kosovo. However, I remain concerned about the many unresolved issues underlying the still fragile security environment. A number of security incidents, including those we saw occur on St. Vitus' Day, underscore the fact that there are many events that could trigger further unrest.

When I visited Kosovo in May, it was apparent that the community-rights framework is still not being effectively implemented. As the international presence in Kosovo is reduced, it is essential that concerted efforts are made not only to ensure that the legal guarantees are not eroded, but that they are actually implemented, particularly in the areas of security, cultural heritage, language and education. This is not easy in the present political context, but I believe it is crucial if we are to secure the long-term stability of Kosovo.

Transitional justice remains an important issue in Kosovo. If the younger generations are not properly educated about their past, they cannot build a future society for all ethnic communities in Kosovo, and failure to do so might result in the victims of the past becoming the perpetrators of tomorrow. Dealing with the past is a powerful tool for conflict prevention in Kosovo, and we should make use of it.

Inter-ethnic tensions remain a potent threat to security and stability in the region. I visited **Skopje** in February and March, after inter-ethnic tensions surged at the beginning of the year. In response, the Government adopted additional security measures to contain the violence. As this society has become more polarized and divided along ethnic lines, it has also become more vulnerable; almost any incident tends to take on an inter-ethnic flavour, even if this is only a matter of perception. Despite the warning signal of last winter's troubles, precious little has been done to address this widening ethnic divide that now affects almost all of society. Bridging this divide should be a matter of urgency, along with any other action that can help foster a more cohesive society.

I have consistently engaged the authorities on integrated education, which in my view is fundamental to build understanding and respect between all ethnic communities in the country. Despite strong commitment and robust investment on the part of the international community, the adopted strategy on integrated education lacks the political backing it needs to stand any chance of success. As a result, education remains an ethno-political battlefield, and much-needed structural reforms have still not been devised. On the positive side, I continue to enjoy excellent co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Science, and I believe some results can be achieved through our continued co-operation, despite the difficult political climate.

Building a successful multi-ethnic State takes more than integrated education. I am also concerned about the lack of a shared civic identity and sense of belonging. These questions are not sufficiently debated in the public discourse. While the Ohrid Framework Agreement has proved successful in bringing an end to hostilities, it is not a blueprint to build a secure future. It is now time for all actors to look beyond Ohrid and find new common ground in search of a viable path into the future. This should be put high on the agenda, and not only in Skopje.

Mr. Chairperson,
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In February I visited **Georgia**, where I continued my dialogue with the Government on the ongoing education reform, which includes an increased focus on teaching the State language in minority schools. My office supports the development of a multilingual education programme in Georgia. I am positively encouraged by the increased number of minority students at the country's universities as a result of the national quota system. The optional introductory year of State-language teaching contributes to this positive development. I generally support the Government's efforts to strengthen minorities' knowledge of the State language, which is a precondition for their full participation in Georgian society. At the same time, however, providing high-quality teaching in minority languages remains as important as ever. This might necessitate organizing additional training programmes for teachers, particularly with regard to multilingual education.

I also continued my engagement on repatriation of the Meskhetians, who were forcibly deported from Georgia by the Soviet regime in the 1940s. I welcome the Government's efforts to develop a strategic concept for repatriation and reintegration of the Meskhetians, and some progress has been made on granting repatriate status since my last statement. I hope to see this continue. The Government has also assured me of its readiness to address the issue of citizenship for the returnees to eliminate any risk of statelessness. It is my hope that the first repatriates will be able to return to Georgia and obtain their citizenship in the near future. I remain committed to this cause, and will continue my involvement in close co-operation with the EU and other international actors.

In Tbilisi I also discussed the situation for the remaining Georgian communities in the Gali and Akhagori districts. Several violent incidents have taken place in recent months, and tensions on the ground are still running high. This bears testimony to the fact that we need a strong OSCE presence in Georgia, and I support the efforts being made towards that end.

While in Tbilisi, I also discussed the participation of minorities in Georgia's political life, especially in light of the upcoming parliamentary elections. I intend to follow up these discussions on my next visit to Georgia.

Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,
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As you are aware, I attach great importance to our work in Central Asia, and I have visited the region several times since my last statement.

In June, I visited **Kazakhstan** to launch a new project on policing in multi-ethnic societies and to follow up on the issues I am involved in. This project on policing in multi-ethnic Kazakhstan was developed by my office following a request from the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan. The initiative aims to enhance the capacity of the Interior Ministry and its police officers to operate in multi-ethnic environments. Its two key components are practical workshops for senior and mid-level police officers from the two ethnically diverse provinces of Almaty and South Kazakhstan, and a range of activities aimed at facilitating the introduction of multi-ethnic policing components into Kazakhstan's police-training curriculum. In particular, the project builds on my *Recommendations on Policing in Multi-Ethnic Societies*, which provide participating States with practical guidance in developing policies and laws to strengthen inter-ethnic relations and increase the operational effectiveness of their police services. I believe policing that is sensitive to the multi-ethnic composition of society can significantly contribute to the prevention and timely diffusion of potential inter-ethnic conflict situations.

In January, I returned to **Kyrgyzstan**. Although two years have now passed since the unrest in Osh, the country is far from healed. President Atambayev has been addressing these issues publicly and has been discouraging nationalist rhetoric. During my visit, I was assured by the President, the Speaker, the Prosecutor General and the leaders of the parliamentary factions that they are committed to reconciliation and will adopt the necessary policy measures.

Yet, despite these positive signals, the problems on the ground persist and the Uzbek community remains marginalized. Reports of intimidation at the hands of law-enforcement agencies abound. There is still a strong perception of incomplete and biased justice, as

numerous alleged perpetrators have not been held to account. This severe lack of trust in the justice system hinders reconciliation efforts. Furthermore, the inter-ethnic clashes between Kyrgyz and Tajik communities that took place at the beginning of this year and a recent upsurge in a number of incidents affecting the Uzbek minority are contributing to a growing sense of fear and vulnerability among national minorities. This underlines the need for a continued international presence.

As a matter of urgency, the relevant authorities have to ensure the basic security and safety of all citizens, including persons belonging to national minorities who may also be particularly vulnerable. I have urged the Government to take visible and effective measures to enforce law and order and to promote the participation of national minorities in State structures. To achieve long-term peace and stability, it is essential that the Government adopts policies promoting the integration and consolidation of this multi-ethnic society. I would welcome the adoption and implementation of the Concept on Ethnic Policy and Consolidation, the development of which I have supported from the outset.

I visited **Uzbekistan** in March to discuss issues related to national minorities in the country and in the region. The talks focused on Uzbekistan's relationship with neighbouring States and the challenges to regional security after 2014. In this regard, I stressed the link between the protection and accommodation of minority rights and regional security, which I have suggested we could explore further in a regional workshop of the Central Asian States, plus Afghanistan. The Government accepted my regional initiatives on minority issues. This autumn I intend to deploy a regional education liaison officer in Almaty, who will facilitate dialogue and co-operation between the countries on education matters. This engagement could eventually be developed into a sustainable structure if the countries in the region find it useful.

Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

After almost 20 years, the HCNM remains a highly relevant and authoritative instrument for the participating States. Next year, we will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Institution in The Hague, and you will all be invited for the anniversary conference in March 2013. This

will provide a unique opportunity to review the past achievements and the present and future challenges facing the Institution. I would also like to say a special thanks to the Governments of the Netherlands, Sweden and Norway – the countries that have provided the High Commissioners to date – for their willingness to support this event financially.

Let me also take this opportunity to express my gratitude to you and your Governments for your continued support. We can only be as effective as you make us, and we are grateful for all your support.

Thank you very much for your attention.