



United States Delegation

Session 14: Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Discrimination National Minorities

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Clifford Bond
at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, Warsaw
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Mr. Moderator,

The United States commends the High Commissioner's ongoing work in Central Asia, southeastern Europe and elsewhere focusing on critical minority issues such as education and multi-ethnic policing, and emphasizing integration rather than segregation of persons belonging to minorities. The United States similarly continues to support OSCE work in its field mission activities relating to tolerance and, of course, ODIHR's own work, including efforts focused on Roma and Sinti.

Despite the ongoing support of OSCE institutions and missions, ultimate responsibility for implementation of OSCE commitments rests with the participating States. With this in mind, the U.S. delegation wishes to highlight some positive developments of the past year, as well as to reiterate a number of long-standing situations where progress needs to be made.

The people of Macedonia recently marked the 5th anniversary of the Ohrid Agreement, which ended a serious conflict by addressing key issues relating to the treatment of national minorities, specifically the Albanian minority. Implementation of the Agreement, of course, takes time, but the United States encourages the newly formed government in Skopje to maintain the momentum. Representatives of the Albanian and other minority groups should also remain constructively engaged in the implementation process. The United States welcomes the progress in the integration of minorities into state structures, including the police and military, and will continue to assist the government and the OSCE Mission in their efforts to complete this process.

The situation for minorities in neighboring Kosovo remains difficult. While there has been much focus recently on the question of Kosovo's status, the goal is a Kosovo where the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons are respected. We encourage Kosovo authorities to reach out to minorities, including by facilitating the return of refugees and displaced persons. We also call upon the leaders of the minority communities to respond and engage, including through participation in the provisional institutions of self-government.

The people of Slovakia have made great progress by working together for the common good of the country. Slovak police have acted effectively in recent cases of racial intolerance and violence against the Hungarian minority. We urge Slovak authorities to continue to pursue policies that avoid creating divisions in society.

The treatment of persons belonging to ethnic Albanian, Macedonian and Turkish minority groups in Greece remains a matter of concern. We welcome Greece's decision to open a mosque in Greece and to their commitment to allow Turkish language study in schools in western Thrace. However, we continue to urge Greece to implement a comprehensive view of ethnicity and human rights incorporating customary international law and its OSCE commitments, including the right of individuals to identify their nationality without disadvantage.

Treatment of Kurds in Turkey similarly remains a concern, including obstacles placed in the way of those who seek to fully express a minority identity through the use of the Kurdish language in broadcasting or publishing. We also hope to see the restoration of independent religious educational institutions for minority groups in Turkey. We urge the Government of Turkey to respect the rights of all its citizens by expanding minority rights.

In parts of the former Soviet Union Russian-speaking minorities face discrimination. This situation is particularly egregious in Turkmenistan, where Russians as well as Uzbeks and other minorities continue to be denied official access to minority-language media and to education in their language. We urge the Turkmen authorities to ensure that policies and practices are brought into conformity with relevant OSCE commitments.

The tragic conflict in Russia's North Caucasus continues to be associated with a variety of human rights abuses such as torture, disappearance, and extrajudicial killing, yet there has been little meaningful accountability. Individuals who appealed to the European Court of Human Rights have been subject to harassment and, in some cases, abduction, apparently to convince them to drop their cases.

Mr. Moderator, protection of national minorities is an obligation of all OSCE States. This is a commitment that should be fully implemented. Much remains to be done to address these problems, including the promotion of tolerance and holding those accountable who commit racially or ethnically-motivated criminal acts.