

Spanish Presidency of the European Union

ENGLISH only

**OSCE Permanent Council No. 815
Vienna, 17th June 2010****EU statement in response to the statement by
Ambassador Knut Vollebaek, OSCE High
Commissioner on National Minorities**

The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Knut Vollebaek back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his comprehensive report.

The past few days have shown once more that the institution of the High Commissioner on National Minorities is a core conflict prevention instrument for the OSCE area. We commend the High Commissioner for his work on the underlying reasons for interethnic strife in Kyrgyzstan and his initiative in issuing an early warning on the possible further deterioration of the situation. It is indeed for these extraordinary situations that such a mandate is given to him in Articles 13 and 14 in the Helsinki Decisions. The EU encourages further attention to this crisis by the High Commissioner, in close co-operation with the Chairman-in-Office and the Secretary-General.

The report of the High Commissioner rightly puts emphasis on the issue of state and minority languages. The EU appreciates the work

done and recommendations given by the High Commissioner with respect to the topic of language and citizenship laws of EU Member States. The EU is aware of these recommendations and wishes to convey that the respective Member States are working together with the High Commissioner and each other to resolve outstanding issues.

The EU is happy to hear of the good co-operation on state language laws between the government of Tajikistan and the High Commissioner.

The work of the High Commissioner on Georgia remains of the utmost importance, particularly given the regrettable absence of OSCE presence on the ground in Georgia. The EU is very concerned to hear of the difference in treatment of ethnic Armenians and Georgians in the Georgian region of Abkhazia. Furthermore, the EU concurs with the High Commissioner that the repatriation process of Meskhetians to Georgia should be carried out in an organised way, to avoid additional tensions in the country. The EU is encouraging the High Commissioner to pay a visit to the Georgian region of South Ossetia to make an on-site assessment, in particular to Akhlagori.

The EU encourages further engagement of the High Commissioner in Ukraine on both the issues of Crimean Tatars and of the rights of persons belonging to other national minorities and language regulations. We would like to know whether the High Commissioner is intending to visit Ukraine, to speak to the new leadership and to consult the representatives of the national minorities.

On the Republic of Moldova and the Transnistrian part of that country, the report informed us of the High Commissioner's plans to deploy an international expert to the Republic of Moldova for a specific period of time, and we are generally supportive of this idea. The EU would be interested to have more details. The EU is concerned about the ongoing discrimination against those in Transnistria who wish to study in their mother tongue and use the Latin alphabet.

In South-East Europe the High Commissioner visited Skopje and Belgrade. The EU supports ambassador Vollebaek in his view that education plays a key role in promoting integration of persons belonging to national minorities and encourages further co-operation with the High Commissioner. The High Commissioner also reports on his work against violence and discrimination of Roma and Sinti. The EU supports projects aimed at raising awareness of the rights of Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians in Kosovo.

Furthermore, the EU is pleased to learn about the good co-operation between the High Commissioner and the Montenegrin authorities on the law on the election of councillors and its subsequent amendments.

Finally, the report of the High Commissioner makes reference to the Bolzano/Bozen recommendations, dealing with State support for minorities residing in another, often neighbouring, State. This is an important topic that merits our attention. In this connection, the EU takes note of the High Commissioner's statement that he sees "a lot of merit in the participating States' political endorsement of the

recommendations". We have supported the holding of several round table conferences on those recommendations.

The EU once again thanks Ambassador Vollebaek and his staff for their outstanding work and expresses full support for the High Commissioner and his team.

Los países candidatos TURQUÍA, CROACIA*; los países del Proceso de Estabilización y Asociación y los países candidatos potenciales, ALBANIA y BOSNIA Y HERZEGOVINA; los países de la Asociación Europea de Libre Comercio y los miembros del Espacio Económico Europeo, ISLANDIA y LIECHTENSTEIN se suman a esta declaración.

*Croacia sigue perteneciendo al proceso de Estabilización y Asociación.