

DRAFT RAPPORTEUR'S REPORT

ENGLISH only

SESSION VIII: Economic and social integration of persons belonging to national minorities

Moderator: Ambassador Colin Munro, UK Delegation to the OSCE

Rapporteur: Bess Brown, Economic Officer, OSCE Centre in Dushanbe

In his presentation, **Mr John de Fonblanque**, Director of the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, called attention to the keynote speech of the High Commissioner in which Mr Ekeus had drawn attention to the importance of integration as a means to avoid or reduce the risks of future tensions involving minority issues. Mr Fonblanque noted that minorities are often worse off in economic terms than are the rest of the population. Although there are exceptions, national minorities are commonly marginalized, thus developing a sense of alienation from the state. While each situation of economic marginalisation is different, it is possible to suggest a few broad principles for dealing with it. These include recognition that economic participation cannot be separated from other forms of participation essential to integration, such as political and cultural participation. In order to participate, minorities have a responsibility to learn the state language. Non-discrimination must be strictly applied, but it is not enough and positive measures need to be taken to bring a disadvantaged minority to the level of the majority. The speaker called for a dialog to establish best practices in minority integration.

The second speaker, Mr Michael Guet, Head of the Roma and Travellers Division, Department des migrations et des Roms/Tsiganes of the Council of Europe, called attention to the need for accurate statistical information to combat negative stereotyping. He added that though some governments have prepared positive legislation on the Roma and Sinti, negative perceptions remain strong and there is a need to persuade majority populations that they can live side-by-side with Roma and travellers. The Council continues to receive complaints about the harassment of these groups in the form of hate speech, forced sterilizations and videos inciting to violence. These issues and the implementation of policies at the national level are to be discussed at a joint OSCE-CofE conference on 20-21 October.

Prof **Karomatullo Olimov**, State Adviser to the President of Tajikistan on social development and public relations, noted that earlier interventions by the Tajik delegation had already raised the issues affecting national minorities in Tajikistan, and he acknowledged that although the country's constitution gives minorities full political and legal rights, some problems remain. In particular, all nationalities in the country suffer economic deprivation, but this is not generally perceived as affecting one national group more than others. There is desperate need for improvement of education, and minority nationalities, though guaranteed by law to right to receive education in their own language in areas of compact settlement, often are unable to obtain textbooks in these languages. The speaker hoped that cooperation with the OSCE will continue to improve the situation of Tajikistan's national minorities.

A representative of the Latvian Human Rights Commission noted that solutions to the problems of ethnic minorities in one place often do not apply in another. He asserted that the situation of non-citizens in Latvia has deteriorated since the country joined the European Union, and the school reform launched in September 2004 is reducing the rights of minorities. Adding that Latvia signed a convention on the protection of national minorities 10 years ago, the speaker appealed for opportunities available to national minorities should meet their desires.

An Italian representative thanked Mr **Guet** for raising the issue of negative stereotyping and noted that stereotypes can change. They cannot be prohibited by law and attempts to eradicate them only make them stronger. They can be countered only by education and making people aware of them. He added that a Code of Conduct for the media has been effective against negative stereotyping in advertisements.

A Swiss speaker said that Switzerland attached great importance to the integration of minorities and noted the need for accurate information on economic exclusion and the reasons for it. Noting that minorities themselves are sometimes not helpful to data collection efforts, he suggested that the OSCE could help countries devise ways to collect statistics on minority exclusion.

A Turkish representative asserted that the Economic Forum cannot make specific recommendations, to which the moderator responded that suggestions can be recorded.

Viktor Kim of the Association of Soviet Koreans in Tajikistan noted that the previous Tajik speaker had mentioned only positive aspects of the situation of national minorities in the country, but as a representative of a national minority he could not quite agree on the lack of problems. These include weak representation of national minorities in the national parliament and the presence of few minorities in small and medium business. He called particular attention to the good examples of national minority integration that have been set by Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation.

A representative of the Association of Uigurs of Kazakhstan explained that the country's Uigurs have been integrated thanks to an educational model that preserves and develops their language and culture. He called on the OSCE to help with migration processes, noting that Kazakhstan has become not only a source country of migrants, but also a receiving and transit country as well.

Prof Emma Usmanova of Karaganda State University offered Kazakhstan as a model of the adaptation of national minorities to conditions in the country of residence, adding that the willingness to adapt is a reaction to the country's attractive economic opportunities.

A representative of the Serbian Helsinki Committee criticised the Serbian government's nationality policy and noted that minorities were treated better when their home country takes an interest in their fate. A member of the OSCE Mission in Serbia commented that

the Serbian government has neglected minorities and he drew attention to some of the Mission's efforts to help overcome this situation.

Robin Seaward of the OSCE Office in Baku noted that marginalized minorities are not necessarily only ethnic, and drew attention to the appearance of marginalized political groups who might feel constrained to turn to extremism for lack of other alternatives.

Latvia's ambassador noted that the country's business is dominated by ethnically mixed firms, adding that most purely Russian firms are small and could benefit from integration. He added that a lack of language skills is limiting economic opportunities, and though there is a negative perception of Russian firms among the population, there is no evidence to justify this stereotype.

Specific suggestions for the OSCE:

- Marginalisation, poverty and lack of access to education and economic opportunity need to be recognised as dangerous in any society.
- The situation of the Roma and Sinti needs much more attention.
- The problem of integrating minorities involves more than just national minorities as defined in the HCNM mandate. It needs to include migrants, new minorities, political minorities and others.
- There is a need to overcome the technical problem of states that do not recognise national minorities. They have problems too, and the principles involved in integration are universally relevant.