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At the request of the OSCE Delegation of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the attached statement delivered to the 960th Meeting of the Permanent Council, on 11 July 2013 is being distributed to all OSCE delegations.



**PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA TO
THE OSCE**

July 11, 2013

Permanent Council

**Statement by Ambassador Zoran Dabik, Permanent Representative of the
Republic of Macedonia to OSCE in response to HCNM Ambassador Knut
Vollebaek**

Thank you Mr. Chair,

Although we subscribed to the EU statement, please allow me, in my national capacity to pay respect to the OSCE's High Commissioner for National Minorities.

On behalf of my Delegation I would like to join others in warmly welcoming Ambassador Vollebaek and thank him for his diligent and prolific agency in promoting and safeguarding national minorities' rights in the OSCE region.

Your constructive approach in resolving burning issues, dear Mr. Vollebaek, along with your peculiar way in practicing diplomacy quietly - will remain an unavoidable hue portraying the Office of the High Commissioner in the future.

We value your and the deliberations of your Office, which we observe as one of the milestones of our Organization invented to efficiently uphold and advance the most sensitive aspects of the fundamental OSCE values - minority rights.

The "Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations" along with the recently inaugurated "Ljubljana Guidelines," represent a unique compendium of accumulated knowledge and experience that were and could be of tremendous assistance in the process of understanding emerging challenges and addressing them accordingly.

The Republic of Macedonia highly appreciates your engagement and contribution to our undertakings aimed at further strengthening of the inter-ethnic fabric of the Macedonian society. We have invested ourselves a great deal of energy in the ongoing processes of designing a sustainable multiethnic and multi-confessional reality. Nonetheless, we particularly value your role in developing and supporting the implementation of the Strategy for Integrated Education.

The Strategy is viewed by the Government as an important document containing a comprehensive set of measures and recommendations tailored to provide for durable interethnic cohesion by motivating such in the schoolyards and classrooms.

We are satisfied that its implementation has started to bear fruit, although the progress has been uneven in all the thematic areas and no progress have been achieved in regard to the language due to a highly politicized debate on the issue.

The implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement remains a high priority of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. Much progress has been achieved as noted in the report on OFA implementation approved last summer. The Report constitutes a valuable tool for further efforts, especially in the areas of equitable representation of all ethnic communities, the use of non-majority languages, as well as on implementation of the Framework Agreement provisions at the local level.

Over the last eleven years of the implementation of the OFA, the Macedonian multi-ethnic society and our institutions have proven that they have a capacity to deal with the challenges of different nature. In this regard the Agreement itself has served and still serves as a fundamental instrument for building a common future.

As one of our colleagues wisely stated recently, “we find its implementation as a process, not as a mere formality.”

Dear Mr. Vollebeak, I have received the news on your health condition with great concern. However, I am thrilled to see that you are already walking the known road, tirelessly advocating for the things you believe in. Towards the end of my statement, but also of your productive mandate, allow me to wish you a good health in the future and thank you for your cooperation in the past. Rest assured that we will continue collaborating with your successor in good faith.

I thank you Mr. Chair.