



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 977
Vienna, 12 December 2013**

**EU statement in response to the Report by the OSCE High
Commissioner on National Minorities, Ms. Astrid Thors**

The European Union warmly welcomes Ms. Astrid Thors to the Permanent Council for the first time since she assumed her duties as High Commissioner on National Minorities and thanks her for her comprehensive report on recent activities.

The European Union considers the office and the mandate of the HCNM to be of the utmost importance for the whole concept of comprehensive security of the OSCE. This Institution is and should remain a core conflict prevention instrument for the whole OSCE area in providing early warning and seeking early action with regard to tensions involving national minorities.

We reiterate the importance the EU attaches to the respect of rights of persons belonging to national minorities. We call on all OSCE participating States to respect the mandate of the HCNM and to co-operate closely with her office on all matters related to national minorities and to make full use of their expertise. Quiet diplomacy, which characterises the work of the High Commissioner, is less visible to the public but brings results of lasting importance. We reiterate that the HCNM should have the necessary means to fulfil her mandate.

We welcome the intention of the HCNM to continue promoting The Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies. We would appreciate hearing more on how to make further use of these guidelines, in particular in relation to Roma and Sinti issues. In this context, we would like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the Council of the EU's recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the member states, adopted earlier this week, which aims to bridge the gaps between Roma and Sinti and the rest of the population.

We recognise the important work done by the HCNM in introducing multilingual education and protecting the linguistic rights of persons belonging to national minorities, including in areas of media and church services, in southern Serbia concerning the ethnic Albanian community, the Romanian-speaking community in eastern Serbia, as well as the Serb community in Kosovo*. We further encourage the Institution to pursue dialogue on these issues taking into consideration the valuable support its mediation has brought so far.

We share the High Commissioner's views on the critical nature of ongoing work to further implement the Ohrid Framework Agreement and urge enhanced efforts at promoting and achieving greater integration. We support the work done in Skopje on integrated education, and given that the Strategy was adopted three years ago encourage the government to work expeditiously and closely with the High Commissioner in this field.

We commend the work done on implementing the national integration strategy and multilingual education in the Republic of Moldova. We welcome the efforts of the HCNM to improve the situation of the Latin-script schools in the Transnistrian region.

The EU welcomes the intention of the High Commissioner to make Central Asia one of her main priorities and was very interested to learn of her first visit to Kyrgyzstan. We commend the HCNM for her efforts to encourage the authorities to safeguard the linguistic and educational rights of persons belonging to national minorities in this country.

We fully support the High Commissioner's intention to engage with the gender section and women's groups concerning the women, peace and security agenda, especially the contribution of empowered women to conflict prevention activities, in line with UNSCR 1325 (2000) and related resolutions.

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on Kosovo declaration of independence.

The EU highly values the contributions from the HCNM and the other autonomous institutions to the Helsinki+40 process, and welcomes the intentions of forthcoming Chairmanships to this end.

Finally, we thank Ms. Thors and her staff for their excellent work and once again express our full support for the High Commissioner and her team.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of MACEDONIA* and MONTENEGRO*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as the Republic of MOLDOVA and ANDORRA align themselves with this statement.

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.