



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
High Commissioner on National Minorities

INTERVENTION

by
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OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

at the
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Mr. President of the Parliamentary Assembly Mr. João Soares

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I thank Dr. Kiljunen for his report and congratulate him on his efforts to establish an independent international commission to investigate what happened in Kyrgyzstan lately. I'll revert to this.

As I said in my address to the Permanent Council on 6 May, post-uprising Kyrgyzstan represents one of the OSCE's biggest challenges since the 2008 war in the Caucasus.

In June, we witnessed a further deterioration of the situation, with great loss of lives in the south of the country and tens of thousands fleeing to neighbouring Uzbekistan. In view of the danger for an escalation of the conflict, affecting other countries in the region, I issued an early warning on 12 June. On 14 June, the Permanent Council met in an extraordinary meeting to discuss the situation. The institute of early warning has only been used once before in the 17 year long history of HCNM.

I fully agree with OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev, when he writes in yesterday's issue of the International Herald Tribune that "[t]he consequences of a complete breakdown of Kyrgyzstan could be very serious for Central Asia and the region beyond. The prospect of further violence, refugee flows to neighbouring countries and a complete loss of control throughout the nation should be sufficient to galvanize world leaders to address the problems".

The situation in Kyrgyzstan continues to be far from stable. I visited Bishkek last week and met with the President, Ms. Otunbaeva. This was my third visit to the country after the April events. I commend the President for her understanding of Kyrgyzstan's multi-ethnic character and her good intentions. I welcome her open approach to working with the international community to face the shortcomings and challenges in her country.

A recurring subject in my talks with Kyrgyz and international interlocutors was the lack of direct contact between the different ethnic communities, and between the minorities, in particular the Uzbek community, and the authorities, both central and local. Upon my suggestion the President has accepted to receive an expert on inter-communal relations to work in the President's office. I am at present seeking to identify a suitable candidate. This expert should assist in setting up a focal point for contact with ethnic minorities who would function as a direct channel between the communities and the country's leadership.

A prerequisite for this and other inter-communal activities is the reestablishment of law and order. The authorities appear to have major difficulties controlling the situation in the country. This may lead to destabilization of the whole region. I, therefore, welcome the decision by the OSCE PC to send police monitors to the south of Kyrgyzstan.

Without finding and addressing the root causes of violence and prosecuting perpetrators, no long-term stability can be achieved in Kyrgyzstan. To move forward, there has to be a thorough investigation into what has been happening in the south of the country. This will require an independent, international assessment commission. The Uzbek minority has lost trust in Kyrgyzstan's military, emergency services and criminal justice sector. Under these circumstances, solely a domestic-led investigation is unlikely to promote reconciliation between Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities.

The consequences of disregard for inter-ethnic issues started to emerge long before the uprising in April this year. An independent international commission is therefore also required in order to study why inter-ethnic tension has been building up in Kyrgyzstan over the years, and, what policy adjustments the eventual Government of Kyrgyzstan will have to do in order to accommodate the country's ethnic diversity.

In the more long term perspective I recommend that a power-sharing arrangement should be considered which would oblige Kyrgyzstan to include ethnic Uzbeks and representatives of other national minorities in all state institutions, including law

enforcement agencies, judicial bodies and public administration at all levels. Whatever the reasons for the violent unrest, we are today faced with an inter-ethnic conflict. In order to build new and sustainable relations between the different communities an active policy of inclusion is required. I stand ready to assist the President and the authorities as soon as the situation on the ground allows me to engage with the minority communities without them fearing for their safety.

I hope that the OSCE PA will continue to stay engaged with this issue and look forward to working with you.

Thank you for your attention.