

**Introductory Remarks of the Chairman-in-Office on the occasion of  
the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the High Commissioner on National Minorities**  
(The Hague, 7 March 2013)

**Your Majesty,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great honour and a pleasure for me as the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office to be present here in The Hague on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of establishment of the High Commissioner on National Minorities.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and to the city of The Hague for hosting this important OSCE Institution.

We all recall that the Netherlands was one of the initiators of this unique OSCE instrument of conflict prevention, and provided the first High Commissioner, dedicated and professional diplomat late Max van der Stoel.

I think the High Commissioner as an Institution aimed at protecting and promoting both diversity and integration, could wish for no more appropriate host than the Netherlands, a country that has come to symbolize the strengths of diversity and openness.

The OSCE remains one of the world's premier security organizations. What makes the OSCE unique is its broad and multi-dimensional concept of security.

The 1975 Helsinki Final Act made an indivisible link between human rights and security. Lasting peace and security can only be achieved by respecting and upholding human rights, including the rights of minorities.

The High Commissioner on National Minorities is a prime example of this unique OSCE approach. The work and the tools employed by the High Commissioner span across all the three OSCE dimensions, but the ultimate aim is clear: to prevent inter-ethnic conflict.

Independence, impartiality and confidentiality constitute the core basis of the High Commissioner preventive diplomacy activities towards maintaining peace and stability in the region.

Independence is crucial to the timing of the HCNM's involvement. However, the HCNM cannot function properly without the political support of the participating States. If the High Commissioner is to be truly effective as a third party, it is equally essential that he or she preserve impartiality at all times.

The condition of confidentiality – which means that the HCNM acts through quiet diplomacy – plays an extremely valuable role in addressing the root causes of conflicts.

For 20 years this OSCE Institution has accumulated considerable experience and has developed practical tools to contribute to the prevention of conflicts at the earliest possible stage.

In this regard I would like to particularly stress the significance of the recently launched Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies as a very important document for all states with the multinational composition.

Ukraine, being a multinational country consisting of more than one hundred nationalities and ethnics, has long enjoyed fruitful cooperation with the High Commissioner on National Minorities.

I can say for certain that we have benefited from this cooperation.

We reiterate our strong support for the institution of the HCNM which is a core conflict prevention instrument for the OSCE area and stress the need for implementation of the commitments undertaken by the participating States to fully cooperate with the High Commissioner in order to enable him to fulfill his mandate.

**Your Majesty,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I believe the OSCE and the HCNM continue to remain highly relevant in our region. As a successful regional security organization, our organization could also become a model and a source for inspiration for other regions of the world.

At the same time the OSCE and the High Commissioner can only be as effective as we, the participating States, allow them to be.

As we today mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this Institution, I would like to call upon all participating States to ensure that the HCNM remains as relevant, useful and authoritative in the next twenty years as it has been until now.

Let me once again thank High Commissioner Vollebaek and his staff for their outstanding work and express full support in the future endeavours.

I thank you.