



PC.DEL/1036/08
27 November 2008

ENGLISH only

Présidence française du Conseil de l'Union européenne

**Permanent Council No. 742
November 27th 2008**

EU Response to the High Commissioner on National Minorities

The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Vollebaek back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his comprehensive report. The EU greatly appreciates his commitment and that of his staff to the work of the Office.

As regards the situation in Georgia, the EU agrees with the HCNM that the right of return of IDPs and refugees to the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is a priority. We reiterate our call for unhindered access for the High Commissioner to these regions. The EU also agrees with the HCNM's view that the Georgian-speaking population in these regions must be able to exercise all their rights, especially the right to education, and that they should not be alienated from the other parts of Georgia.

We also support the High Commissioner's focus on other issues in Georgia, such as the integration of the Armenian and Azeri minorities, and the return of Meskhetians. With regard to the latter, the EU supports the HCNM in his plea to the Georgian authorities to extend the deadline for application by all those wishing to return beyond the end of this year.

ue2008.fr

We welcome the High Commissioner's initiative to organize a round table in Odessa that allowed an informal 5+2 meeting concerning the conflict in Republic of Moldova.

The EU supports the efforts of the HCNM as regards Ukraine and encourages the state authorities as well as minority representatives to continue their co-operation with the High Commissioner. The EU notes with particular interest his statement on the draft law on formerly deported people.

The European Union remains committed to playing a leading role in ensuring stability in Kosovo, also through the EULEX and the EUSR. In this respect the EU shares the High Commissioner's assessment of the importance of the implementation of the laws which are crucial for the process of reconciliation and the functioning of Kosovo as a multi-ethnic society.

The EU very much welcomes the HCNM's visit to Serbia to assess the situation facing national minorities, including in Vojvodina and South Serbia, and echoes his call, notwithstanding the steps taken, for a more proactive approach on the part of the Serbian authorities.

The EU welcomes the progress made by Croatia in key areas relating to national minorities.

The EU has noted that Kazakhstan is in the process of amending its electoral legislation. We hope that Kazakhstan will follow-up the recommendations made by the HCNM, as well as consult with the ODIHR.

The EU encourages Turkmenistan to engage in a meaningful dialogue with the HCNM in order to improve the situation of minorities in that country.

ue2008.fr

The EU welcomes the launching of the Bolzano/Bozen recommendations and the HCNMs efforts aimed at their dissemination through regional conferences. The recommendations are all the more topical because of the events of August this year in Georgia. When states have tried to use ethnic, linguistic or religious groups beyond their borders as levers to exert political or even military power, the consequences have often been tragic. As the HCNM has pointed out, and as the Recommendations on Minorities in Inter-State Relations point out, states must be guided by responsibility and the will to build confidence in dealing with minority issues in their inter-state relations. This requirement of responsibility and confidence is at the heart of our OSCE commitments.

La Turquie, la Croatie* et l'ancienne République yougoslave de Macédoine*, pays candidats ; l'Albanie, la Bosnie – Herzégovine et le Monténégro, pays du processus de stabilisation et d'association et candidats potentiels ; l'Islande, pays de l'Association Européenne de libre-échange et membre de l'Espace économique européen ; ainsi que la Géorgie se rallient à cette déclaration.

*La Croatie et l'ancienne République yougoslave de Macédoine continuent à participer au processus de stabilisation et d'association.

ue2008.fr