



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE  
HIGH COMMISSIONER ON NATIONAL MINORITIES

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad to the Permanent Council  
Vienna, 7 November 2019

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chair,

Norway joins others in welcoming the High Commissioner on National Minorities, Ambassador Lamberto Zannier, back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his report.

The High Commissioner spoke on his co-operation with the United Nations on the issue of statelessness. Norway supports the efforts by UNHCR to end statelessness and commends the states that have made progress to this end. Co-operation between the UN and the High Commissioner on this issue can yield practical value, as it strengthens our ability to see, and address, statelessness through the lens of conflict prevention.

The High Commissioner remains the OSCE's instrument of conflict prevention at the earliest possible stage, when tensions involve national minorities. For his efforts to succeed, states must respect and protect the autonomy granted him by his mandate. States must allow him to act, travel and communicate without interference, including in occupied and disputed territory. States are to offer support and cooperation. As an autonomous institution of the OSCE, it is up to the High Commissioner to decide on the implementation of his mandate and to set his own priorities, thematic as well as geographic.

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We do not, and should not, expect every activity of the High Commissioner to be made public. Nor do we expect him to make every detail known, even when an activity has been made public. That is the nature of quiet diplomacy.

Still, we expect all activities of the High Commissioner to be compliant with the applicable OSCE commitments. Therefore, we were pleased to see the High Commissioner's state in his May report to the Council, that gender mainstreaming is about hearing and reflecting the needs and views of all members of society and about achieving the full ownership of political decisions, processes and negotiations. That is, to understand that gender mainstreaming is a means to fulfil the High Commissioner's mandate. Assessing the implications for women, as well as men, of our planned actions and policies is not merely an issue of equality, but a means to reach our primary objective of conflict prevention in the most effective manner.

The current report is regrettably scant on the gender mainstreaming of the activities mentioned in the report. Could the High Commissioner elaborate on the implementation of his specific commitments under the Gender Action Plan of these activities?

Thank you