



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

PC.DEL/1708/21
4 November 2021

ENGLISH only

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORT
FROM THE HIGH COMMISSIONER ON NATIONAL MINORITIES

Delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 4 November 2021

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madame Chair,

It is a pleasure to again welcome Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov to the Permanent Council.

We thank him for his comprehensive report, which displays the broad scope of activities undertaken by the High Commissioner on National Minorities.

The High Commissioner is mandated to provide early warning and early action to prevent ethnic tensions that might endanger peace, stability, or friendly relations between OSCE participating States or within the OSCE region. He frequently reminds participating States of their minority rights obligations because failure to respect them is a significant source of ethnic tensions that could lead to conflict. As such the mandate falls clearly under the OSCE's 1st dimension of security. However, ethnic tensions are often a result of challenges related to human rights and economic exclusion. Accordingly, the work of the High Commissioner is profoundly connected to all the OSCE's three dimensions of security.

Norway attaches great importance to the autonomy, mandate, and work of all three OSCE institutions, and advocates that they are funded in a sufficient and reliable manner. We took note of the HCNMs presentation of the proposed budget and priorities for 2022 in the ACMF last week and look positively on an increase in the budget. We call on all participating States to allow for a budget that is sufficient for the High Commissioner to carry out his mandated tasks.

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The High Commissioner has specific commitments under the Gender Action Plan. We commend the HCNM for devoting more attention to gender equality, and for taking a gender sensitive approach in all activities. We highly value the systematic approach to this in his work. We believe this will allow the High Commissioner, more effectively, to fulfil his mandate.

In chairing the Human Dimension Committee this year, the Norwegian delegation has on several occasions enjoyed the assistance of the High Commissioner and his staff in the preparation of several meetings, and we would again like to thank the High Commissioner for having taken the time to address the committee in Tuesday's HDC meeting on National Minorities and Indigenous peoples. In the meeting, it was reemphasized that respecting the rights of national minorities is fundamental to the comprehensive OSCE framework for peace and stability in the region.

I would like to commend the High Commissioner and his team, for continued diligence and adjustment of their working methods to the pandemic situation. Clearly, the High Commissioner's method of silent diplomacy has been hindered to some extent during the pandemic. But it seems that the new digital platform also has contributed to more efficient conducting of some of the tasks of the High Commissioner. We are happy to see that activities have been adjusted to new formats and secured continuity over the last year.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate Norway's strong support for the HCNM, his mandate and his institution's autonomy. We encourage all participating States to fully cooperate with the HCNM and his team to enable him to fulfil this mandate.

Ambassador Abdrakhmanov, we wish you and your team the best of luck in your efforts.

Thank you