



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

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by

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to

the Tenth Anniversary Seminar of the
**Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation
of National Minorities in Public Life**

Check Against Delivery!

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Director Holmström,
State Secretary Hallerby,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you.

I am pleased to be a part of the homecoming of the Lund Recommendations. This set of recommendations is arguably the most important document ever developed under the aegis of the High Commissioner on National Minorities.

As parents, we want to have a stake in the education of our children. As citizens, we want our opinion to be heard by the decision makers. As TV viewers, we want our public broadcasters to screen programmes that meet our needs.

To be listened to, is the essence of participatory democracy. In 1990, in Paris, the same logic prompted the OSCE leaders to undertake “to build, consolidate and strengthen democracy as the only system of government of our nations.” This was not just a pledge to any kind of “democracy”, but one of a “representative and pluralist character”.

Plurality is indeed a feature of all our societies. Some enjoy difference; others may wish to stifle it. One thing is certain, however, diversity is here to stay. The Wilsonian vision of ethnically pure States failed in Europe in the interbellum period. There is no reason to believe that it will succeed in the age of the Internet, BBC and Airbus A380.

The Helsinki process pioneered another important principle: “equal security for all our countries.” Sovereign equality of States implies that Moldova and Monaco, Belarus and Belgium, Germany and Georgia have equal right of say in the world arena.

Diversity between our countries is accepted and to some extent organized. When it comes to handling difference within our societies, however, there is still a long way to go.

When Max van der Stoep asked a group of experts to write the Lund Recommendations, he explained his intention with these words: “to take a stand against the increasing scepticism about the chances of

survival of multi-ethnic states since the dramatic dissolution of Yugoslavia”.

Today, in 2009, there are still many people who question the very possibility of a viable multi-ethnic State. This is why the Lund Recommendations are still so relevant.

Rather than imposing solutions on decision makers, these Recommendations give them the opportunity to reflect. And to see what method of devolution fits them best.

The Lund Recommendations are extremely rich in offering choices: decentralization, autonomy, electoral-system design, advisory and consultative bodies. These options are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they can be mutually reinforcing.

All these choices were previously unknown to politicians, constitutionalists and members of civil societies. The Lund Recommendations collects them together to demonstrate the wide scope of options available once a societal consensus is reached.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Whatever the concrete design, European experience has turned one hypothesis into a theorem: the best way to preserve inter-ethnic peace is to allow minorities to participate. To take part in governing schools, to be elected to the regional or national legislature, or to be part of the police service.

You could ask: What about the majority rule and the "one person, one vote" principle? Majority rule in plural societies fails to take into account special minority needs. If the majority turns a deaf ear to these needs or openly brushes them aside, minorities become alienated from the State. This increases separation and feeds discontent, which can burst like a dam.

Therefore, democracy in plural societies must be equated not with simple majority rule but with the participation of all groups in government.

It is important to remind ourselves that neither the Lund Recommendations nor the High Commissioner seek to give minorities the final say in all decisions. As Arend Lijphard once so neatly

put it “The veto power must be regarded as a kind of emergency brake, not as part of the normal machinery of government.”¹

Another important lesson learned from the Lund Recommendations is that having a voice does not necessarily equate to being heard. Our emphasis must be on both words when talking about “effective participation”. Minority participation in politics without influence is dangerous. It ultimately encourages the disenfranchised to advance their agendas outside the peaceful democratic framework.

This brings me to my next point. It is not so much which particular dish a State selects from the Lund menu that matters, it is the spirit with which minority problems are approached. The most sophisticated statutory provision for participatory rights or the broadest autonomy may not be worth the paper it is written on, if the minority voice is ignored.

On the other hand, modest, but well-functioning methods recognizing and accepting the differences in society may pave the way for social integration and cohesion.

Distinguished colleagues,

The relevance of both the participation debate and the Lund Recommendations has been proven by the key spin-offs they have generated.

Guidelines to Assist National Minority Participation in the Electoral Process, developed in 2000 by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in conjunction with the International IDEA and the HCNM, constitute one of the most striking examples of successful resort to the Lund Recommendations. They directly develop recommendations 7 to 10 on the issue of elections of Lund Recommendations’. This success led the ODIHR and HCNM to work together on a second edition, which is forthcoming and entitled: *The Handbook on Monitoring and Promoting the Participation of National Minorities in Electoral Process*.

Not least, the Advisory Committee to the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the

¹ Arend Lijphart, "Consociation: The Model and its Application in Divided Societies," in Rea, D. (ed.), *Political Co-Operation in Divided Societies* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1982).

Protection of National Minorities adopted its own Commentary on the effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life and public affairs. This extensive text was inspired by the Lund Recommendations and may strengthen them in the context of the implementation of the Framework Convention. The documents do not in any way compete, but rather complement each other.

These texts demonstrate that participation is not an imaginary issue, but a genuine problem reported on a daily basis by ODIHR election observers or Advisory Committee country experts.

I am grateful to both the ODIHR and the Advisory Committee for operationalizing the Lund Recommendations and building on them. I see your presence here today as a further sign of how much we can and do support each other in our work.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This event is not meant to be a grand celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Lund Recommendations. Rather, it is an opportunity, with your help, to exchange views and review experiences in the application of these Recommendations. I want to hear your thoughts on which of the recommended arrangements have served us well in the past 10 years, which have worked less well and those which have malfunctioned all together.

I am not calling for amendments to the Lund Recommendations. Instead, I wish to strengthen their application and extend the fields of their effective operation. I therefore urge us all not shun away from sensitive issues, such as autonomy or kin-states, so that we can reach practical conclusions.

I look forward to a good intellectual workout in the course of the next two days. Your ideas and thoughts are regularly a great inspiration to us, practitioners.

Thank you for your attention.