



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

**THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP:
POLICE AND MINORITIES IN CRIMEA**

Opening Address
by
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to the
conference
**"Modernizing Police and Promoting Integration:
Challenges for Multi-Ethnic Societies"**

Simferopil, Ukraine – 6 November 2008

Mr. Deputy Head of the Crimean Interior Department,
Distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great privilege to stand here today and address such a unique audience of policemen, regional authorities and NGOs. I am particularly pleased that we have been joined by the senior staff of the Crimean police. The Interior Ministry is facing daunting challenges. I therefore commend your determination to work on them. Likewise, I commend your commitment to seeing the police and the public as partners. Most importantly, I commend your openness to dialogue with the diverse ethnic communities of Crimea.

Even though this is just my second visit to Crimea, I have already come to admire your remarkable peninsula. There are few places in Europe of comparable natural beauty and historical heritage. Equally unparalleled is the palette of cultures, languages and peoples that makes up your common home. For centuries, Ukrainians, Russians and Crimean Tatars have lived as neighbours. You helped each other in troubled times and shared the joy of success. You rebuilt your peninsula in the aftermath of a terrible war. Building an independent Ukraine together. Your tolerance endures under oppression and hardship.

With each visit, I learn about another facet of Crimean history. The hundreds of thousands of people deported in cattle trucks in the dead of night. The cruelty Stalin's henchmen. The courage and resilience shown by the Crimean Tatar people. There is no doubt that the abolition of Crimean autonomy; the destruction of Crimean Tatar community institutions and the removal of most signs of Crimean Tatar culture and language from the peninsula has dramatically held back the ethno-cultural development of Crimean Tatars. These crimes have impoverished the whole region. We should not forget that other communities suffered at the hands of the Stalinist regime too.

By looking back at this painful past, you are also looking to the future. How can you bring up your children in the spirit of mutual respect and understanding? How can you ensure that your communities are free of crime and inter-ethnic animosity? How can you unite communities in the common goal of building a home where no one is treated as a second-class citizen?

The police have a vital role to play in such a future. My key message to you today is that the police and the ethnic communities have much to gain from working closely together. I urge you to shake hands and to work together to bring safety to your cities, towns and villages. In my remarks to you today, I will speak about the benefits police-minority partnership entails. But I will also warn you of the perils of police and minorities only seeing one another through the protective visors of riot police helmets.

As a law-abiding citizen, I rarely come into direct contact with the police. I am sure the same applies to you. Most of the time, we see police officers smiling at children, helping an old lady board the tram or explaining to a confused tourist how to reach that beautiful church or mosque they so much want to see. The police are seen as our friends which is good. That is how it should be.

There is however a darker, more sinister side to policing in some places. I have witnessed through my peace building work in Latin America, Sri Lanka and the Balkans in the 1990s, how racist, abusive policing can make poor inter-ethnic relations worse. I have heard of stories of mono-ethnic forces calling themselves "police," extorting bribes from and racketeering minorities. I have heard stories of such "law enforcers" being involved in forced evictions and ethnic cleansing. I have heard stories of such armed gangsters torturing and executing people just because they looked different or spoke a different language.

It is only natural that such policing breeds political conflict and often results in ethnic strife and civil war. We do not want to see this type of policing in our societies

But as I said before, police and minorities CAN benefit from working with each other. Co-operation and partnership between the police and increasing numbers of the population brings more operational information, more intelligence, more expertise in languages and cultures. This translates into an operationally better police service, engendering greater acceptance by and greater legitimacy in the society it serves. Ultimately leading to the police being seen as an impartial and professional service that reflects that society's demographic make-up.

There are advantages too for minorities. Minorities feel more secure in their communities when they know their police officers and associate with them. Minorities will begin to see that their sons and daughters too can have a successful career in the police service. Because

the police operate at “street level”, when their actions are just, legitimate and accountable this contributes to minorities feeling at “home” and having a sense of belonging to and ownership of the country in which they live. Policing is, as a result, an essential support for maintaining a free and open society that is at peace with itself.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

So the benefits of police-minority interaction are clear. But the road to achieving such a partnership can be a bumpy and twisting one. A good map is essential. This is why the High Commissioner on National Minorities developed the “Recommendations on Policing in Multi-Ethnic Societies”. This document can provide such a roadmap for police and minorities on their challenging journey towards co-operation. My plea to you today is to grasp this roadmap with both hands and make partnership a reality.

An integrated policy on minority policing needs is also essential. It will need the support of political leaders and police managers. This is essential too. Rank-and-file police officers must be both encouraged and supported by their superiors, otherwise the best of intentions are doomed to failure. The fact that the Ukrainian Interior Ministry is co-sponsoring this event together with the local NGO IDC reassures me that the former will be the case.

In addition to political and managerial support, there are certain areas that deserve special attention. This is why several HCNM experts arrived in Crimea yesterday in order to be with us today. They have unrivalled knowledge in these areas and will talk about them throughout the conference. Do tap into their expertise.

One area of particular importance is recruitment. I am aware how sensitive this topic is but it has to be addressed. Failure to do so could impair the entire reform effort.

A representative police service has many advantages if compared to a mono-ethnic police force. Better minority representation increases the operational effectiveness of the police. Minority police officers can more easily win the trust and confidence of their own communities. A police service that is seen to incorporate sections of society that are otherwise excluded or marginalized will be more likely to secure the co-operation of members of these communities. Victims will more readily report crimes. Witnesses will more

willingly co-operate with the police. Minority communities will be more inclined to offer valuable intelligence and information. The overall effect is safer communities and a reduction in illegal activities in areas of minority concentration.

A more representative police service sends out positive signals and will enjoy an enhanced legitimacy in the society it serves. The police service needs to be "perceived" to be representing a broader political consensus if it is to secure legitimacy. Those responsible for maintaining law and order must be representative of their fellow citizens and be part of the communities they serve. The police service must mirror the demographics of the population.

Training and mechanisms of police-minority interaction are also vital. I am pleased to see that a good share of the conference is devoted to these topics.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me make myself clear. The problems that we are discussing here today are relevant for all of us in the OSCE. They are debated in Britain, in Norway, in Kyrgyzstan and in the Balkans. They have relevance for all OSCE participating States; without exception. We all face similar challenges and must find innovative ways to tackle them. Only by learning from one another's experiences can we make headway.

This conference is a first step for Ukraine, the Interior Ministry and for the region of Crimea along that bumpy road we must all tread. It is a bold and wise move by the Ukrainian authorities. These times call for boldness, for having the courage to think outside the box and reach out across barriers. Past injustices must be healed. Positive memories must be reinforced to shape a brighter future. Dialogue, consultation and partnership are a sure route to effective policing and inter-ethnic harmony.

I congratulate all of you here on this first important step. As High Commissioner, I pledge to support your endeavour. The fruits of your endeavours will indeed be sweet. With this in mind, I would like to wish you every success with today's conference.

Thank you for your attention.