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OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting Warsaw, 19 - 30 September 2016

Working session 10: Tolerance and non-discrimination I, including address by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

Mr. Moderator,

I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The European Union welcomes the Director of the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, Mr. Henrik Villadsen, to this OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting and we thank him for his presentation. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Astrid Thors for all the work done in fulfilling the mandate as High Commissioner on National Minorities over the last three years. We look forward to a speedy appointment of a new High Commissioner.

The European Union recommends that:

- Participating States meet the commitment made by all OSCE participating States, without exception, to fully cooperate with the High Commissioner in order to enable the High Commissioner to fulfil its mandate. This includes granting HCNM full, free and unrestricted access.
- Participating States extend an invitation to the HCNM and make full use of the expertise of this Institution. Quiet diplomacy, which the High Commissioner also implements, is complementary to public diplomacy and can help to bring results of lasting importance.
- Persons belonging to national minorities should be able to exercise fully and effectively their human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination and in full equality before the law.



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The European Union strongly believes that protection of human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, is crucial for maintaining regional peace and stability.

The European Union considers the office and the mandate of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) to be of the utmost importance for the OSCE concept of comprehensive security. This autonomous institution is and should remain a core conflict prevention instrument for the whole OSCE area in providing early warning and seeking early action with regard to tensions involving national minorities.

The European Union attaches great importance to the work done in the areas of education, including in multilingual and integrated education, effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in public life, and policing in multi-ethnic societies. We commend the High Commissioner particularly for activities regarding these issues. We look forward to other thematic work foreseen for the near future, such as access of persons belonging to national minorities to justice and updating of 'The 2003 Guidelines on the Use of Minority Languages in the Broadcast Media'.

We welcome the HCNM's engagement in regard to the crisis in and around Ukraine. We have repeatedly expressed our concern about the deteriorating human rights situation on the Crimean Peninsula, in particular about the precarious position of both Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian-speaking communities after the illegal annexation of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation. Full compliance with international human rights standards and other obligations under international law must be ensured without delay.

We are deeply concerned that the de facto authorities on the illegally annexed Crimean Peninsula have so far not accommodated requests from the High Commissioner to facilitate a visit to Crimea. We reiterate that the HCNM and other international human rights actors should be granted full, free and unrestricted access to the whole territory of Ukraine, including Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.



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We support the High Commissioner's engagement in the Western Balkans promoting long-term stability and the ongoing activities in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, in particular concerning language issues.

We would like to mention here as examples of this engagement the strong involvement of the Office with issues that concern persons belonging to national minorities in the ongoing process of political and legislative reforms in Ukraine; the continuous engagement with the Republic of Moldova on integration in society of persons belonging to minorities, while protecting minority languages and cultures and the monitoring of the situation of the Latin-script schools in the Transnistrian region; the implementation of a multilingual education system in Georgia as well as protection of the universal right to education in the Georgian breakaway region of Abkhazia and the review of the Ohrid Framework Agreement in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

We once again express our full support for the office, mandate and autonomy of the High Commissioner and we reiterate the importance we attach to the protection of rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

We look forward to fruitful discussions and a reinforced commitment by all participating States in the field of protecting these rights.

Thank you.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.