



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

Address by  
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to the  
**Conference marking the 20th anniversary of *The Lund Recommendations***  
***on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life***

**[Check against delivery]**

Lund, Sweden – 14 November 2019

Madam President,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure and an honour for me to welcome you all here today to mark the 20th anniversary of *The Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life*. These recommendations constitute one of the most important policy documents of my institution, and support our wider efforts to promote the integration of diverse societies as a key approach to ensure stability and prevent crises and conflicts. This is precisely the perspective from which I, as the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities [HCNM], approach the topic of effective participation, and that is where I would like to start.

The premise of the Lund Recommendations is that when people have a real opportunity to participate effectively in the society in which they live, including through benefitting from protections for their identity, society is less likely to be marred by conflict. It is less likely to fail. A meaningful level of representation and participation of minorities in all fields of a country's public life – such as in elected assemblies, executive structures, the public sector, the courts and the civil service – is vital to foster loyalty to, and trust in, the institutions of the State. This also requires a willingness on the part of minorities to engage: integration is a two-way process. This helps ensure ownership of decision-making processes by all members of society, which in turn positively affects social cohesion.

These recommendations are a product of the late 1990s. The dramatic and violent dissolution of the former Yugoslavia revealed the dangers associated with attempts to create ethnically homogenous states in historically multi-ethnic environments. The first High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoep, witnessed that first hand. The interethnic violence that he was confronted with in those years prompted him to take a political stand against – to use his own words – the “increasing scepticism about the chances for survival of multi-ethnic states”. The Lund Recommendations, published in 1999, were the tangible translation of this political stance.

Twenty years later, the focus has moved beyond the multi-ethnic societies resulting from the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia or the Soviet Union. *All* of our societies have become

increasingly diverse. Partly, this is a consequence of globalization; but it is also a result of immigration, which diversifies the demographic composition of society, posing new challenges.

Yet, despite these changes, or perhaps because of them, the level of scepticism about the chances for survival of multi-ethnic states has not decreased. Quite the opposite. Many people still question the very possibility of a viable multi-ethnic State. Others deliberately work against it. Ultra-nationalism, populism and identity politics can be found all over the OSCE space. This is detrimental to the integration of society with respect for diversity. Along with increasingly inflammatory language in mainstream political discourse, hate crimes and hate speech are rising. Diversity is under attack, and so is the notion of pluralistic and representative democracies.

That is why Max van der Stoel's political stand needs to be renewed, and that is why these recommendations are no less relevant today than they were 20 years ago.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like us to reflect on the title of today's event: "From Lund to Ljubljana" – taking us from participation in the strictest sense to the integration of diverse societies. The Lund Recommendations focus on a number of specific arrangements and forums through which, and in which, participation can manifest – decentralization, autonomy, electoral systems, advisory and consultative bodies, political structures – to name but a few. While I attach great importance to developing such arrangements and introducing incentives that facilitate the meaningful participation of all, this is not enough. I am convinced that the key to full participation lies in a wider approach that tackles all spheres of public life and all groups of society – minorities and majority, women and men. Hence the title of the conference "From Lund to Ljubljana", where "Ljubljana" stands for *The Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies*, the document that has come to represent the guiding approach of my office.

Only when social groups enjoy genuine interaction and mutual benefits can participation in public structures be truly sustainable. But, this requires a long-term approach that pays

attention to different thematic issues. For example, members of minorities need to be able to speak the State language in order to participate fully in the political, social and economic life of the country where they reside. Likewise, if the education system encourages students from different ethnic backgrounds to interact and share experiences as children, they will be more likely to imagine and create a joint future together as adults. So the work to increase the effective participation of all in public life needs to be built into and straddle across multiple policy areas. As such, it is the end result of the policy advice that I offer to participating States in a number of specific sectors.

When a society is well integrated, public institutions become its natural reflection. The opposite of course is also true. When all social groups enjoy effective participation, the interests of all segments of society will be represented, policies will be more inclusive and everyone, irrespective of their background, will feel they belong to one state. The adjective “effective”, as opposed to “nominal”, is intentional. Participation without tangible influence is dangerous. It can encourage the disenchanted to advance their agendas outside the framework of democracy.

When I talk about the participation of all social groups, this is not restricted to ethnicity. As a man and as a man in a leading role, it is incumbent upon me to remind everyone of the barriers that women still face. While women lag behind in terms of participation and representation in most spheres of public life, in the case of minority women, gender intersects with other identity markers, such as ethnicity and language, often exposing them to double discrimination. The reasons that minority women may be at greater risk of marginalization are contextual, and often act in combination. Cultural factors may play a role. Minority women may have fewer opportunities to acquire proficiency in the State language. Without that, they may have problems accessing the documents required to apply for a public post or to register as candidates. They may face difficulties being publically visible, making the connections needed to rise in the political ranks, or accumulating the financial resources needed for successful campaigns – as I believe the majority of women in politics do. Therefore, truly *inclusive* policies are also *gender-mainstreamed* policies. I am increasingly trying to look through this lens in my work.

To sum up, I favour a dual approach. On the one side, we need measures that catalyse and sometimes, perhaps on a temporary and transitional basis, even *force* the participation of all

social groups in public structures, such as quotas. On the other side, this should be accompanied by long-term investment to create the conditions that support the participation of all. The long-term vision and commitment that is required sometimes clashes with the short-term logic of politics, which often focuses on quick results. Addressing the root causes of inter-ethnic conflict is long-term work; however, it generates high returns for the security and stability of a society. That is in everyone's interest.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

This event will reflect my office's wider understanding of the notion of "participation". It will also tackle some thematic areas that were not included in the Lund Recommendations, but that I find increasingly relevant in our efforts to mainstream minority participation across the various sectors of public life.

As such, beyond this introductory panel, and a keynote speech by her Excellency Tarja Halonen, the former president of Finland, who is gracing us with her presence today, we have organized this conference into four panels. Each panel focuses on a specific theme: political participation; cross-border and economic participation; the participation of minority women in public life, and the specific experience of Sweden. I am delighted to welcome such wealth of expertise in this room, ranging from colleagues from the OSCE and partner institutions, to renowned experts and academics, as well as practitioners from a number of OSCE participating States. As part of today's event, we will also present a compilation of scholarly articles on minority participation edited and contributed to by my staff. We will also show you a short video about the efforts Georgia is making to increase minority participation and a project that my office implemented to support internships for minority youth in mainstream political parties.

I hope that today we can identify and highlight good practices that can be replicated elsewhere, while also reviewing the outstanding challenges and policy areas where additional work may be warranted. We hope to ensure that these recommendations remain a practical and effective tool for all countries developing policies to foster the participation of all. All our recommendations and guidelines are conceived in this spirit: to contribute to the fulfilment of our main objective of conflict prevention.

To conclude, please allow me to thank some of the people that have made this event possible. First of all, I would like to thank the Government of Sweden for its generous support to this conference. Thank you also to the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, which played an instrumental role in the process of drafting these recommendations in 1999, for co-hosting the event today. Thanks also to the Municipality of Lund for financing today's lunch and for being represented here today.

And thank you all for being here. Your presence is to me a sign of your interest to continue engaging, exchanging experiences and developing. I am looking forward to your contributions.

Before moving onto the interventions of our distinguished guests, I would like to take one more minute of your time. As we normally do with all of our key guidelines and recommendations, we have produced a short animated video to provide introduction to the principles in the Lund Recommendations, which I have the pleasure of presenting here today.

Thank you for the attention, and thank you for watching.