



## 30th anniversary OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

### *Speaker biographies*

#### Opening remarks

#### Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities



**Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov** of Kazakhstan was appointed as the sixth OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities on 4 December 2020.

Kairat Abdrakhmanov is a distinguished and decorated career diplomat from Kazakhstan. He joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of

Kazakhstan in 1993, where he held a number of key positions, including Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. His first overseas assignment was at the Embassy of Kazakhstan to the United Kingdom. He also served at different times as the Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Sweden, Denmark, Austria and Israel. From 2013 to 2016, he served as Kazakhstan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and led Kazakhstan's bid to become the first Central Asian State elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.

He represented his country as the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the UN Security Council between 2017 and 2018. Abdrakhmanov served as Kazakhstan's Permanent Representative to the OSCE from 2007 to 2013 and presided over the OSCE Permanent Council in 2010 when Kazakhstan Chaired the OSCE in 2010. He was instrumental in organizing the first OSCE Summit in 11 years in December 2010, during which the Astana Commemorative Declaration: Towards a Security Community was adopted.



## **His Excellency Bujar Osmani, OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia**



**Bujar Osmani** was born on 11 September 1979 in Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia. He graduated from the Faculty of Medicine, at the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, in Skopje, in 2004. He completed part of his residency in London, the United Kingdom in 2006/2007, officially becoming a specialist medical surgeon in 2012. In 2014, Mr. Osmani started following PhD studies at the Skopje Ss. Cyril and Methodius University Doctoral Studies School, wherefrom he graduated, acquiring a PhD degree in July 2018.

Mr. Osmani started his professional practice as a doctor of medicine in 2004, at the St. Naum of Ohrid Surgical Diseases University Clinic in Skopje. In the period 2008 – 2011, he served as Minister of Health. As of 2011, he worked as a Specialist Medical Surgeon at the Digestive Surgery University Clinic in Skopje. In 2011, he was also

appointed as the Public Relations Secretary of the leadership of the Democratic Union for Integration political party.

In June 2017, Mr. Osmani was appointed Deputy Prime Minister in charge of European Affairs. Over the course of his term in this office, the Republic of North Macedonia made serious progress in its European integration, such as moving into the second stage of the Stabilisation and Association Process with the European Union, then becoming a member state of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative, while the key importance achievement was the decision that the Republic of North Macedonia start accession negotiations with the European Union.

As the head of the Secretariat for European Affairs, Mr. Osmani simultaneously discharged the duties of a National Coordinator for Distribution of Foreign Assistance and IPA Funds in the country. Under his leadership, the absorption of IPA funds allocated by the European Union saw a significant improvement, with cooperation in the bilateral assistance setting also becoming considerably advanced.

In July 2018, Mr. Osmani was appointed Head of the National Delegation and Chief Negotiator with the European Union, under whose leadership the process of explanatory screening with the European Union successfully started, was carried out, and completed.

Mr. Osmani is a standing member of the Government Crisis Headquarters dealing with the COVID-19 crisis, while in the first half of 2020, Mr. Osmani discharged the duties of Chief Coordinator of Local Crisis Headquarters and the Crisis Headquarters for the City of Skopje.



On 30 August 2020, Bujar Osmani was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia. After the formal start of EU accession negotiations, in September 2022 Osmani was once again appointed Head of the National Delegation.

Mr. Osmani is married and a father of two children. He is fluent in Albanian (mother tongue), Macedonian, English, and partially French.

### **Her Excellency Helga Maria Schmid, OSCE Secretary General**



**Helga Maria Schmid** was appointed to the post of Secretary General of the OSCE in December 2020 for a three-year term.

She first joined the diplomatic service as Assistant Private Secretary to the Deputy Foreign Minister of Germany in charge of European Affairs (1990–1991). Since then, she has held several prominent diplomatic positions during her career. Early on, she was Political Adviser to Foreign Minister Klaus

Kinkel and Head of Cabinet to Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer; and just prior to her appointment as OSCE Secretary General, she was Secretary General for the European External Action Service.

From 2011 to 2016, she was the Deputy Secretary General for Political Affairs for the European External Action Service. Preceding that, she was the Director of the Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit (Policy Unit) of the High Representative for the CFSP in the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union in Brussels.



**His Excellency Paul van den IJssel, Ambassador for International Organisations,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands**



**Paul van den IJssel** holds a law degree from the University of Amsterdam. He joined the Foreign Service of the Netherlands in 1985. Held several posts at Embassies a.o. in Nigeria, Poland and Germany and at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 2009 Mr. van den IJssel was appointed Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva (CD). From 2013 to 2016 Ambassador for the Netherlands in Jordan. From 2017 to 2021 Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the OPCW and to the ICC. In 2022 appointed as Ambassador for International Organisations in the Netherlands.

He has published various articles on arms control, security policy and public international law.

In the past, member of the boards of various organisations in the fields of sports, education and culture. Active in local politics in Wassenaar from 1995 to July 2006. Coaching of MBO students and refugees. Teaching Law at MBO Mondriaan.

### **Keynote speech**

**Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights**



**Ilze Brands Kehris** assumed her functions as Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights on 14 January 2020, heading the UN Human Rights Office in New York.

Ms. Brands Kehris combines extensive expertise in political science, conflict prevention and human rights, with a specialisation in minority rights, and long-standing experience in intergovernmental fora and with civil society organisations.

From 2017 to 2019, Ms. Brands Kehris served as independent Expert Member of the United Nations Human Rights Committee, the treaty body monitoring the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Between 2016 and 2019, she served as a senior research



fellow at the Raoul Wallenberg Institute for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, Lund University, in Sweden.

She has previously held several leadership positions in national and regional level human rights organisations, including as Member and Chairperson of the Management Board of the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency, and Director of the Office of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Ms. Brands Kehris also held the positions as Director of the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, first Vice-President and Member of the Advisory Committee on the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, and Member of the Management Board and Vice-Chairperson of the Executive Board of the European Union Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. She also served as Director of the Latvian Centre for Human Rights.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations from Mills College in California, USA, a Master of Arts in Political Science (International Relations) from Columbia University in New York, USA, where she also pursued Ph.D. studies.

Ms. Brands Kehris, who is Latvian, speaks English, Russian, French, Latvian and Swedish.

### **Panel discussion: 30 years of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities**

#### **Ambassador Rolf Ekéus, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (2001 – 2007)**



**Rolf Ekéus** was appointed OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities at the Eighth OSCE Ministerial Council on 28 November 2000 for a three-year term beginning on 1 July 2001. This was subsequently extended for another three years on 1 July 2004.

Ambassador Ekéus has had a long and distinguished career in the Swedish diplomatic service, serving his country in Bonn, Nairobi, New York and The Hague. He was also the Swedish Ambassador to the United States.

Ambassador Ekéus was active in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) during the period of post-Communist transition. He headed the Swedish delegation to the CSCE from 1988 to 1992 and played a key role in drafting the Charter of Paris for a New Europe (1990).



Arms control and disarmament have been recurrent themes in Mr. Ekéus' career. He is best known for his work as Executive Chairman of the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM) where he led the weapons inspectors between 1991 and 1997. Previously, he was Permanent Representative of Sweden to the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva from 1983 to 1988 and Chairman of the CD's negotiations on the Chemical Weapons Convention from 1984 to 1987.

**Ambassador Knut Vollebaek, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (2007 – 2013)**



**Ambassador Knut Vollebaek** holds a master's degree in Economics from the University of Bergen 1972. He has completed studies in political science and languages, University of Oslo; University of California, Santa Barbara; l'Institut Catholique de Paris and Universidad Complutense, Madrid. Norwegian Foreign Service from 1973. Served in India, Spain and Zimbabwe. Ambassador to Central America (1991-1993) and to United States (2001-2007).

Deputy Foreign Minister (1989-1990). Foreign Minister (1997-2000). OSCE Chairman-in-Office 1999. OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (2007-2013). Alternate Member of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, 2009-2011, 2015-2017. Chair of the UN Advisory Board on Human Security since 2016, member since 2014. Chair, Board of Commissioners, International Commission on Missing Persons, since 2023, Commissioner since 2013. Deputy Chair of the Norwegian National Human Rights Institution (2015-2019). Deputy Chair of "Stiftelsen Diakonissehuset Lovisenberg", a Norwegian charitable foundation that runs hospitals, rehabilitation centres, a university college for nursing and nursing homes. Member of the board of NOAS, Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers. Chair of the Election Committee, Norwegian Refugee Council.



### **Ms. Astrid Thors, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (2013 – 2016)**



**Astrid Thors** is a lawyer and a Finnish politician and former OSCE HCNM (2013-2016).

She was the Finnish Minister of Migration and European Affairs between 2007-2011. She has served both in the European Parliament (1996-2004) and in the Finnish Parliament (2004-2013).

She holds and has held several positions of trust related to Human Rights and minority rights, including chairing the Advisory Board on Human Rights of the MFA of Finland.

She has worked in the town hall of Helsinki (deputy town clerk) and at the Association

of Finnish Local Authorities (Director and legal advisor) as well as a political advisor to Finnish ministers.

She holds and has held several positions of trust in the fields of visual and performing arts and higher education, including being the vice president of the board of the University of Arts Helsinki (Uniarts, formed 2012 by merger of 3 Academies).

### **Ambassador Lamberto Zannier, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (2007 – 2020)**



**Ambassador Lamberto Zannier** is a High-Level Expert at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. He served as OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (2017 - 2020), OSCE Secretary General (2011 - 2017), UN Special Representative for Kosovo and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) with rank of UN Under-Secretary-General (2008 - 2011), Coordinator for European Common Foreign and Security Policy in the Italian MFA (2006 - 2008) and Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre (2002 - 2006).

Previous senior positions include Representative of Italy to OPCW, Chairperson of the negotiations on the adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and Head of Disarmament, Arms Control and Cooperative Security at NATO. He held other diplomatic postings in Rome, The Hague, Abu Dhabi and Vienna.



Ambassador Zannier holds a Law Degree and an Honorary Doctorate in International and Diplomatic Sciences from the University of Trieste, Italy.

## **Presentation of HCNM's Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Social and Economic Life**

### **Ms. Jennifer Croft, City Ombudsman at the City of Portland**



**Jennifer Croft** worked as a Senior Adviser to the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities from 2010-2017. She also served as Deputy Head of the Human Rights Department at the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and held several positions with the U.S. State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development.

Currently she is the City Ombudsman in Portland, Oregon. She holds degrees from Columbia University and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University





**Dr. Ferdinand de Varennes, Former UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, and Adjunct Professor at the National University of Ireland-Galway and Visiting Professor at the Université Catholique de Lyon**



**Dr Fernand de Varennes** is since 2017 the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues. As part of his mandate, he is the reference point at the United Nations on the protection of the human rights of national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. He is also Adjunct and Visiting Professor at the National University of Ireland-Galway (Ireland) and Visiting Professor at the Université Catholique de Lyon (France) and at the European Regional MA in Democracy and Human Rights in SEE, Global Campus South-East Europe, University of Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

The author of some 300 publications in more than 30 languages, he is renowned globally as a leading expert on the human rights of minorities and has been awarded a number of accolades including the 2021 Prize of the Federalist Union of European Nationalities, the 2004 LinguaPax Award (Barcelona, Spain), the Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland, and the Tip O'Neill Peace Fellowship (Northern Ireland, UK).

**Dr. Jennifer Jackson-Preece, Associate Professor of Nationalism, European Institute & Department of International Relations, London School of Economics and Political Science**



**Jennifer Jackson-Preece** is Associate Professor of Nationalism at the London School of Economics and Political Science, with a joint appointment in the European Institute and the Department of International Relations. Dr Jackson-Preece is an expert on problems and practices of nationalism, human and minority rights, and conflict prevention. She has published extensively on these topics in books, journals and blogs. Dr Jackson-Preece has an established track record as a policy

advisor to governments, international organisations and NGOs. She previously cooperated with the OSCE HCNM on the Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies (2012), the



Graz Recommendations on Access to Justice for National Minorities (2017) and the Tallinn Guidelines on National Minorities and the Media in the Digital Age (2019).

**Dr. Andreea Cârstocea, Senior Researcher, Head of the Equality and Inclusion Cluster, European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI)**



**Dr Andreea Cârstocea** is Senior Researcher and Head of the Cluster Equality and Inclusion at the European Centre for Minority Issues. Her main research interests include aspects related to the participation of national minorities in social and economic life; social justice; and inclusive education. Andreea's recent publications examined the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Roma communities across Eastern Europe. She

also serves as Editor of the Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe. Andreea has previously worked as Senior Expert for the Department of Interethnic Relations of the Romanian Government (2001-2010) and holds a PhD in Political Science (2012) from University College London UK.

**Mr. William Romans, Head of Operations, Dispute Resolution, World Bank Accountability Mechanism**



**William Romans** is Head of Operations with the Dispute Resolution Service of the World Bank Accountability Mechanism, supporting access to independent and impartial conflict resolution options for communities impacted by projects that receive World Bank financing.

He has worked in international organizations for over twenty years. This has included serving as Senior Legal Adviser to the OSCE HCNM, Chief of the Human Rights Section with the OSCE in Kosovo and participating on the core teams of several OSCE ODIHR international election observation missions. With the EU, he headed the work of the human rights and gender team in EULEX-Kosovo, the EU's largest-ever field mission. From 2002-2009 he was UN staff, including roles as Senior Legal Officer with the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and Judgment Coordinator at the International



Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, working to promote international accountability for atrocities. William has also co-edited two published volumes on conflict prevention and the protection of national minorities.

William holds an LL.M. from Stellenbosch University in South Africa and an LL.B. (Hon) from Edinburgh University in Scotland. He is a CEDR-qualified mediator and is admitted to practice law in New York State.

### **Panel discussion: Effective participation of national minorities in social and economic life: practical implications and good practices**

#### **Prof. Dr. Petra Roter, President of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Council of Europe**



**Prof. Dr. Petra Roter**, President of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe. Dr. Roter a Professor of International Relations at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences, and a Senior Researcher at the Centre of International Relations. She is a National Director of the European Master programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (Venice); and a member of the Scientific Board of the EURAC Institute for Minority Rights.

Dr. Roter holds a PhD from the University of Cambridge. She was a visiting professor or researcher at the universities of Padova, Cambridge, Warwick and Tübingen. Her research interests include international minority protection, minority rights, human rights protection and various aspects of international relations, norms, international institutions, post-conflict reconstruction and conflict management. Her courses include international protection of minorities and international conflict management. She is a member of the Human Rights Commission in Slovenia.

She served on the 2020 and 2022 Max van der Stoel award committee. Within her ongoing collaboration with the HCNM, she has contributed to the development of several sets of recommendations and guidelines, including *The Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies*. She was a member of the Advisory Committee in her first term between 2014 and 2018) when she was elected first vice president and then the president between 2016 and 2018). Her second mandate began in June 2022.



**Ms. Brankica Janković, Commissioner for Protection of Equality of the Republic of Serbia**



**Brankica Janković**, Master of Laws, was elected as the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality of the Republic of Serbia for the first time in May 2015 and for the second time in November 2020 by the National Assembly. Before her election, she held the position of State Secretary in the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Policy from 2012 to 2014 and served as the Director of the

Gerontology Center Belgrade from 2006 to 2012.

Commissioner Janković teaches master's studies in Multicultural Social Work – Anti-Discrimination Policies and Practices at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade. Additionally, she is a guest lecturer at the Higher Security Studies of the School of National Defense of the Army of the Republic of Serbia. Throughout her professional career, she has authored numerous professional papers and publications. She has been honored with several awards and recognition certificates, including the "2018 Contribution of the Year to Europe" award and the OSCE "2017 Person of the Year" award.

**Dr. Vida Montvydaitė, Director of the Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania**



**Ms Vida Montvydaitė** has been Director of the Department for National Minorities to the Government of the Republic of Lithuania since 1st July 2015. The Department for National Minorities to the Government of the Republic of Lithuania was re-established 1st July 2015. The Department is responsible for supporting collective government, helping to ensure the effective development, coordination and implementation of national and ethnic minorities' policy in the country. It cooperates with State institutions, nongovernmental organizations, national minority communities, and the Council of National Communities representing all the national minorities of Lithuania.

Ms. Vida Montvydaitė is a career civil servant. Previously she served as Minister-Counsellor of Consulate of the Republic of Lithuania in Sejny (Poland).



She pursued her professional career in the public administration sector with a focus on national and ethnic minority groups. Her experience in administration management, international cooperation, including academic work, is substantial. Vida Montvydaitė is the recipient of a Doctor of Philosophy in Humanities and a qualified historian. Ms Montvydaitė has published scientific articles on Lithuanian Diaspora history, politics and ethnic identity.

**Ms. Theresa Segovia, Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**



**Theresa Segovia** works for the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), as Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator of the Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights (OEJECR), which supports the agency’s mission by providing leadership on EPA’s environmental justice and external civil rights priorities.

Ms. Segovia coordinates implementation of those priorities across the agency’s national programs, regions, and across partnerships with other federal agencies and coregulators in state, tribal, and local government, and communities. Her office provides resources and other technical assistance on civil rights and environmental justice, engages with communities with environmental justice concerns and provides

support for community-led action.

Before joining the EPA, Ms. Segovia worked for fifteen years, at the US Department of Justice (DOJ), first as a human trafficking investigator in the Criminal Section of the Civil Rights Division, then as National Program Manager for the Criminal Section, before becoming the Associate Director of Operations for DOJ’s Community Relations Service. There, she led teams that responded to civil rights violations related to race, color and national origin, as well as hate crimes related to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, and disability.

As seasoned leader in the area of civil and human rights, Ms. Segovia holds a bachelor of science degree from the University of Maryland and did her post-baccalaureate studies in socio-cultural anthropology at the University of Houston. She also holds certificates in Public Sector Leadership from Cornell University and Leadership in a Democratic Society from the Federal Executive Institute.