



STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORT FROM THE HIGH COMMISSIONER
ON NATIONAL MINORITIES

As delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 7 July 2022

Mr. Chair,

We join others in welcoming the High Commissioner on National Minorities, Kairat Abdrakhmanov, back to the Permanent Council and we thank him for his comprehensive report on the broad scope of activities undertaken by his institution. We see great value in these activities and how they contribute to strengthening inter-ethnic relations in our diverse societies and help participating States to enhance security through ensuring the full enjoyment of human rights by all inhabitants, including those belonging to national minorities.

We reiterate our full support to the autonomy and mandate of the of the High Commissioner. The mandate includes providing early warning and early action to prevent ethnic tensions from developing into conflict. Thus, it is highly relevant for understanding and handling current and future conflicts in our region.

Even though the mandate as such falls within the OSCE's first dimension of security, tensions are often a result of challenges related to human rights and economic inclusion. Accordingly, the work of the High Commissioner is connected to all three of the OSCE's dimensions of security.

Mr. Chair,

The High Commissioner's report to the Permanent Council is delivered against the bleak backdrop of the Russian Federation's brutal and unjustified war against Ukraine. As the High Commissioner points out in his report, "the Russian Federation featured minority issues in its arguments for its military actions." This type of rhetoric is not new and existed well before February 2022.

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As if the Russian shelling, killing, and looting was not enough, the population in the areas under Russian occupation is being repressed. Among them are national and ethnic minorities, as well as indigenous peoples. Their rights are abused, and their freedoms denied under the occupying regime. Even though the repression has intensified in the past months, it is not a new phenomenon. Such measures have been imposed on the territories occupied by Russia or its proxies for many years, also in other countries such as Georgia and Moldova. Let me reiterate that it is Russia's primary responsibility to protect the rights of all those who are in the areas under their *de facto* control. In short, Russia can best ensure the rights and freedoms of the peoples of Ukraine by stopping the war and pulling out all its forces.

Mr. Chair,

We need The High Commissioner to be engaged and to use the tools at his disposal to the best for the war-affected population. We appreciate that the High Commissioner called for the violence to end in Ukraine. We respect the value of silent diplomacy and confidentiality. This work method has proven both wise and efficient over the years. However, the scale of the military aggression in Ukraine has not been seen in Europe since the Second World War. When the Russian Federation falsely tried to use minority issues to justify its war, we would have expected a prompt and more pronounced reaction to Russia's rhetoric and blatant military aggression.

Thank you.