



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Response to the Report by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Lamberto Zannier**

As delivered by Chargé d’Affaires, a.i. Harry Kamian  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
June 7, 2018

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The United States warmly welcomes OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) Lamberto Zannier back to the Permanent Council. Mr. High Commissioner, thank you for your detailed and thoughtful report. We also thank you and your team for helping participating States fulfill their commitments, address concerns, and defuse tensions with regard to persons belonging to minorities. As you mentioned in your opening remarks, this is indeed an integral component of conflict prevention.

High Commissioner, the United States welcomes the information regarding your recent and future activities, as well as your engagement in Serbia, Ukraine, Slovakia, Latvia, Hungary, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Uzbekistan. We note your productive engagement with the Ukrainian government and other institutions, including the Rada. The United States urges you and other participating States to support Ukraine’s efforts to build institutional structures to fulfill its commitments regarding national minorities. We should also continue to support its ongoing efforts to implement the Venice Commission’s recommendations, and to continue promoting the social, economic, and political inclusion of all the people of Ukraine.

Mr. High Commissioner, the United States welcomes your continued focus on the plight of the Crimean Tatars in Russia-occupied Crimea. We look forward to follow-up on the issues and concerns that were raised in the 2015 joint report by your office and ODIHR on the situation in Crimea. There are widespread reports of Russia subjecting Crimean Tatars to physical abuse; arbitrary arrests; interrogation; politically-motivated prosecutions; arbitrary or unlawful searches of homes, schools, and places of worship; and wrongful imprisonment. Russian occupation authorities continue to ban the Crimean Tatar Mejlis as an “extremist” organization and have failed to investigate adequately reports of killings and disappearances. We call on the Russian Federation to end its occupation of Crimea, and to bring to justice those responsible for over a dozen documented, unsolved disappearances of Crimean Tatars since its occupation began. Members of other communities targeted for discrimination, harassment, and prosecution in Russia-occupied Crimea include ethnic Ukrainians who try to maintain their Ukrainian identity.

High Commissioner, the United States appreciates your work in Central Asia, including your recent trips to the Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan. We encourage you to keep building on the newfound “positive regional dynamic” that you mentioned and we welcome your further

thoughts on future activities and concrete projects in the region. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) you briefly described that you signed with the Kyrgyz government sounds promising and we look forward to hearing more about it in the future. Certainly your Central Asia Education Program has laid the foundation for success, as new political will to improve interethnic relations in the region takes root.

Elsewhere in the OSCE region, you have repeatedly demonstrated that successes are possible on complicated minority issues in Georgia and Moldova. And, we remain committed to supporting your efforts as positive momentum builds.

The United States agrees with you that HCNM's thematic guidelines can play a useful role in helping states find common ground and provide a useful toolbox to help develop and implement policies. We appreciate the work on the illustrated Serbian-Albanian /Albanian-Serbian, and Macedonian-Albanian/Albanian-Macedonian dictionaries for elementary school children. These are indeed concrete examples of your offices positive impact; the fact that they have been so sought after online is a testament to the need for them.

We also appreciate your raising the complex and sensitive issue of the "damaging impact of competing and confrontational historical narratives." You correctly mention that there are indeed good practices across the OSCE area where societies have found ways to deal with divisive historical issues in constructive ways. And, we agree that governments should create the optimum conditions for a tolerant, inclusive debate on historical memory with respect for human rights.

The United States recognizes that challenges involving persons belonging to minorities within the OSCE region may rapidly change, and could require engagement from your office on short notice. The HCNM needs flexibility in order to respond effectively to evolving situations. You and your office must be able to reallocate resources to meet current and emerging needs. Maintaining close cooperation with other OSCE institutions and international organizations will ensure that your interventions are timely, targeted, and value-added.

In conclusion, Mr. Chair, the United States values highly the work of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. We commit to working with you, Mr. High Commissioner, with other delegations, the CiO, the Secretary General, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and the Representative on Freedom of the Media, to strengthen the HCNM and the OSCE's other important institutions. The United States will continue to defend their independence, their mandates, and their budgets.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.