

ENGLISH only



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

# **Response to the Report by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Knut Vollebaeck**

As delivered by Political Counselor, Samuel C. Laeuchli  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
November 8, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Ambassador, the United States is happy to see you here at the Permanent Council, and acknowledges with enthusiasm and pleasure the new energy and vitality you have brought along to your new position as High Commissioner on National Minorities.

The United States supports strongly the Office of the High Commissioner and believes it plays an important role in identifying and addressing minority-related issues throughout the OSCE region. Ambassador Vollebaeck, your focus on non-confrontational conflict prevention through early warning and intervention is especially welcome.

As you mentioned at this year's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, the OSCE has been successful in developing international standards on human and minority rights. In addition, experience has shown that detailed recommendations and guidelines are often helpful for public authorities and minorities in addressing and implementing national minority commitments. We welcome the five sets of recommendations endorsed by your predecessors in the fields of education, languages, participation, broadcast media, and policing in multiethnic societies and believe they will assist participating States in creating the framework needed to meet their OSCE commitments.

We anticipate that you will build upon the good work of your predecessors by collaborating closely with appropriate governments to prepare legislation and develop the political framework needed to promote harmonious inter-ethnic relations. We hope this work spans borders as we believe that the HCNM can play a unique role in bringing together neighboring countries to address regional minority issues.

We encourage you to support participating States with recommendations and comments on minority-related policies and, when necessary, augment your recommendations with in-country targeted projects. Your office's portfolio of projects is, in our opinion, well-developed and relevant for the integration of minorities.

We are pleased to see that in your relatively short time in office, you have already traveled to the Balkans, Georgia and to Central Asia. Important work lies ahead in Kosovo and we think the efforts of the High Commissioner with the Kosovar Albanian and Serb communities are vital and should continue. We hope you will also agree with us on the importance of the

work of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo for the continuation of work on fostering interethnic dialogue and protection of the rights of minorities. We would welcome your comments on future OSCE activities in Kosovo at the current juncture in discussions on Kosovo's future status.

The mandate of the HCNM requires your office to work in confidence and independently of all parties. We want to reiterate our strong support for the continued autonomy of the HCNM, as well as that of all OSCE institutions.

The United States thanks you and your staff for presenting us today with your plan to help protect the rights of national minorities and promote tolerance within and among OSCE participating States. We continue to support your valuable work.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.