



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

RESPONSE TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER ON
NATIONAL MINORITIES,
AMBASSADOR KNUT VOLLEBÆK,

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
17 June, 2010

Mr. Chairperson,

I am pleased to join previous speakers in welcoming the High Commissioner on National Minorities, Ambassador Knut Vollebæk, back to the Permanent Council, and thanking him for his comprehensive and interesting report, which this time around was particularly rich in important and topical issues, some of them requiring our urgent attention and follow-up.

Recent events have again demonstrated the importance of the HCNM's mission, and we highly commend him and his staff for all their efforts to prevent issues relating to the treatment of national minorities from giving rise to conflicts, both within and between states.

I can save some time by subscribing to the comprehensive views expressed by the Spanish representative on behalf of the EU, which will allow me to concentrate my remarks on two issues, namely the situation in Kyrgyzstan and the Bolzano/Bozen recommendations.

Norway fully shares the High Commissioner's grave concern over inter-ethnic violence in Kyrgyzstan, which has led to a high number of casualties and thousands of people belonging to national minority groups leaving the country. We insist that all provocations should cease immediately and that all parties should show restraint. Norway expresses her deepest condolences to the families and friends of the victims. We support the actions undertaken by the Chairmanship and the other OSCE institutions, and we urge them, as well as the international community at large, in particular the UN, to show initiative, flexibility and determination, in order to come to grips with the unacceptable situation still prevailing.

Norway stands ready to contribute to respond to the most urgent humanitarian needs of the affected population, as the High Commissioner called for on Monday. Like others, Norway urges the parties concerned, as well as the neighboring countries, which are already shouldering heavy burdens, to take further appropriate measures to safeguard access to vulnerable populations and to contribute, where appropriate, to humanitarian support points and corridors, in full accordance with international law. We will welcome and be supportive of proposals for enhancing OSCE capacities to respond to the needs of the affected people, both in the immediate future and in the longer run.

Mr. Chairperson,

We would again like to commend the High Commissioner for the efforts laid down in establishing a set of Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations. The Bolzano-Bozen recommendations are of great value in ensuring the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and, perhaps even more important, in promoting trust and cooperation between States. We are gratified to note the increasing level of support expressed in the Corfu process to the food-for-thought paper on the Bolzano/Bozen recommendations that we are co-sponsoring. Seven more co-sponsors have now joined us, and a revised version containing the final list of co-sponsors was circulated yesterday. We believe that the usefulness of the recommendations would be further enhanced if they would be endorsed in a political declaration by participating States at the highest political level. I don't need to provide any further arguments or justification for such a line of action, because the High Commissioner himself just did that, in a very clear and persuasive manner, in his concluding remarks. In the meantime, we see that the recommendations are proving their worth every day, by helping to avoid conflicts and promoting good relations between states, when they are being observed and adhered to.

Finally, Mr. Chairperson,

We would like to wish Ambassador Vollebæk, as well as his competent and dedicated staff, every success in their important work, which is particularly challenging at this juncture.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson