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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ANDREY KELIN, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1062nd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

16 July 2015

**In response to the report by Ms. Astrid Thors,
OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities**

Mr. Chairperson,
Ms. Thors,

We read with interest your report on your Office's main areas of activity during the past six months.

We agree that many problems remain in the OSCE area in terms of ensuring the rights of national minorities. Stability and security within States and in the relations between them depend in no small measure on how these problems are solved. The scope for the work of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) therefore remains very broad. In that connection, objective assessments and a depoliticized approach to the implementation of your mandate will be a fundamental factor for the successful work of your institution.

You have repeatedly stressed that responsibility for ensuring the rights of national minorities lies first and foremost with the States themselves. We fully share this approach. However, the selective nature of the policy pursued by a number of OSCE countries in protecting minority rights and their desire to interpret the terminology and provisions of universally recognized international documents in this field to the detriment of the protection of minorities should remain a constant focus of the HCNM's attention.

We share your view regarding the importance of "integration with respect for diversity" for society's stability and security. In this context, we believe it essential to pay the utmost attention to preserving the ethnocultural identity of national minorities and developing intercultural dialogue within society. Creating conditions for the full participation of national minorities in the political, economic, social and cultural life of society is equally important. Also of no small importance is promoting understanding and respect within society for the rights of national minorities on the part of the titular nation.

We welcome the HCNM's intention to continue focusing on the situation regarding linguistic rights and access to education, including reform in this area.

We share your concern at the adoption in Ukraine of decommunization laws without their broad discussion. As life shows, such ill-conceived policies bring division and tension to the already difficult mutual relations in Ukrainian society. We share your concern at the consequences of the campaign unleashed to destroy monuments. We agree that the historical background needs to be dealt with carefully and should not be used for political ends. This is especially true with respect to the hasty glorification of what are contested historical figures and events to put it mildly.

We welcome your recent visit to western Ukraine. Unfortunately, the recent events in Mukacheve and Lviv show that extremists are continuing to undermine stability in this part of Ukraine.

We ask that attention continue to be paid to ensuring the rights of national minorities in Ukraine, including in the south-east of the country. We are relying on your objectivity, even-handedness and impartiality in evaluating the situation of the Russian-speaking population and other minorities affected by the crisis and armed conflict.

As we also assumed, your concern regarding the situation of national minorities in the Republic of Crimea, a constituent entity of the Russian Federation, is based on one-sided and biased information. The ATR television channel mentioned in your report used to broadcast in Russian 65 per cent of the time. A new, real Crimean Tatar channel is now being set up. There are legal complexities in land matters because many plots were obtained through “self-acquisition”. This needs to be remedied by legalizing matters. You are also evidently unaware that in recent months 300,000 Ukrainian citizens resettled in Crimea. Some of them have received Russian citizenship. Some have a temporary residence permit. They are treated exactly the same, regardless of whether they are Crimean Tatars, Ukrainians, Greeks, Bulgarians or members of other national minorities. We shall not divide people into “especially vulnerable categories”. All of Russia’s commitments under international human rights treaties apply to all these people in full measure. Any information on violations of human rights and freedoms that may occur, if that is what they truly are, will be carefully examined by the competent authorities and the Commissioner for Human Rights, and the necessary measures will be taken to bring the guilty parties to justice. We are not avoiding dialogue on this matter. This dialogue is continuing with you.

As for a possible visit to Crimea in line with your mandate, we should like to recall that grounds for such a visit may be tensions regarding national minorities (paragraph 11b). But this is not the case in Crimea. Before such a visit can take place, you should, pursuant to paragraph 27 of your mandate, provide us with a list of concerns and information regarding the purpose of the visit. We have yet to see such information.

As for your claim regarding the “Russian unlawful annexation” of Crimea, I might recall that it is outside the remit of the OSCE executive structures to provide assessments of particular political events on which there is no consensus within the OSCE itself. This is the exclusive prerogative of the States themselves.

With regard to other geographical aspects of the HCNM’s work during the period under review, we note increased attention only to certain OSCE regions – the Balkans, Central Asia and the Caucasus. The situation in other parts of Europe and on the North American continent is still not taken into account.

We are disappointed at the insufficient attention paid by the HCNM to the problems of mass statelessness in Latvia and Estonia. This primarily concerns the unresolved issue regarding the automatic granting of citizenship to the children of non-citizens in Latvia. Simplifying the procedure for granting citizenship during registration does not solve the problem – the right remains *de jure* a matter for the competent authorities. The participation of non-citizens in local elections in Latvia is as relevant as ever. We also fail to understand the silence regarding cases of discrimination against national minorities in economic life and the restriction of Russian-language information and education in the Baltic countries. We trust that you will continue dialogue with the authorities on these worrying trends as well.

In conclusion, we should like to stress that ignoring the threat of growing intolerance, aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism threatens the security not only of the States in which certain Western countries are carrying out destructive experiments, but also of the entire OSCE region. The Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities should play a leading role through its timely response to these threats and challenges.

Thank you for your attention.