



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1199
Vienna, 1 November 2018**

**EU Statement in response to the report by the OSCE High
Commissioner on National Minorities, Amb. Lamberto
Zannier**

The European Union warmly welcomes the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), Ambassador Lamberto Zannier, to the Permanent Council, one year since his first appearance in his current capacity. We thank him for his statement, and for distributing the text well ahead of time.

The European Union strongly believes that protection of human rights, including those of persons belonging to national minorities, is crucial for maintaining regional peace and stability. The EU remains committed to ensuring the rights already exercised by persons belonging to national minorities, as enshrined in the relevant UN, Council of Europe Conventions and related protocols and in OSCE commitments on non-discrimination and respect for diversity. The rights of persons belonging to national minorities are an important aspect of our co-operation with all our partner countries, including our closest neighbours, and are consistently raised in our political and human rights dialogues. Within the EU, Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights prohibits discrimination on any ground including against persons belonging to national minorities. This protection is bolstered by EU directives tackling discrimination. We reiterate that persons belonging to national minorities should be able to exercise fully and effectively their human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination and in full equality before the law. We reiterate the importance of an effective implementation of legislation on the protection of human rights including those of persons

belonging to national minorities and their non-discriminatory treatment throughout the territory of pS.

We underline that conflict prevention and early warning continue to be among our top priorities. The mandate of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, providing early warning and seeking early action with regard to tensions involving national minorities, is of utmost importance for the OSCE concept of comprehensive security.

In the 25 years since its foundation, the institution of the HCNM has proven to be a core conflict prevention instrument for the whole OSCE area. The fact that most of the work is done far from the international spotlights, does in no way limit the importance nor the appreciation for this contribution to the peace and stability in our region.

We agree with the High Commissioner that recent trends underline the importance of scaling up conflict prevention efforts. At the same time, we are convinced that the HCNM mandate, as agreed over 25 years ago, is as relevant and adequate as ever. We reiterate that co-operation of all participating States is necessary to enable the High Commissioner to fulfil his mandate.

We support the HCNM's active engagement throughout the OSCE region. In addition, we commend the efforts to improve sustainable integration of diverse and multiethnic societies, as well as political representation of persons belonging to national minorities. We welcome the HCNM's focus on effective implementation of legal framework on the rights of persons belonging to minorities as well as his continued engagement with regard to language and education issues, and dialogue facilitation.

Further, we welcome the continued focus of the High Commissioner to thematic work, and efforts to advocate the wider use of the rich body of HCNM thematic guidelines and recommendations. In this regard, we look forward to the anniversary of the Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life, as well as the

publication of a new set of Guidelines on National Minorities and the Media in the Digital Age next year.

Finally, we look forward to next week's 25th anniversary of the HCNM, combined with the presentation of the Max van der Stoep Award. We look forward to continuing the co-operation with the High Commissioner and his able team and wish them every success in the next 25 years to come.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.