

DELEGATION OF TURKEY

24 September 2007

**HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
(Warsaw, 24 September-5 October)**

Working Session 1: Tolerance and Non-discrimination (National Minorities)

“NEW MINORITIES”

Madame Moderator,

I refer colleagues and fellow participants to the text which I will circulate for words of thanks, welcome and appreciation to Polish authorities as our hosts, Ambassador Strohal, Spanish Chairmanship, key-note speakers, namely Secretary General, Representative of Freedom of the Media and Mr. Aaron Rhodes for their stimulating presentations to set the scene for the Conference. I have saved Ambassador Vollebaek for a special address as he and the occasion deserve.

My delegation has aligned itself with the joint EU statement. I shall proceed to complement the themes contained therein with an intervention which I am making on a national basis.

I would like to welcome Ambassador Knut Vollebaek, High Commissioner on National Minorities, back to the OSCE, this time with a new but not less challenging responsibility.

I have listened to his key-note address this morning and also the one at the beginning of this session with great interest, trying to understand the nature of the Vollebaek touch to the implementation of the HCNM's mandate. It is already evident that moderation and discretion will be his hallmarks. We took note of the vision put forward by Ambassador Vollebaek which involved a requisite element of continuity with a high and impressive dose of dedication and conviction pertaining to the issues related to the persons belonging to national minorities. I was also heartened to hear this afternoon that our new High Commissioner would pursue the element of continuity with regard to the relevance of the HCNM mandate, activities and recommendations also to the migrant communities. I shall be led by Ambassador Vollebaek's advice and try not to refer to the “who” and the “title” but concentrate on “how”, that is as much as the term “new minorities” is avoidable.

As Ambassador Vollebaek mentioned, his predecessor Ambassador Ekeus, introducing the report, which he commissioned from the Migration Policy Group as a remit from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, at the annual session of that body in Brussels last year, noted “*the issue which confronts states and governments is essentially the same whether we are talking about national minorities or “new minorities”, namely what policies to adopt in order to manage diversity in their societies in ways which promote stability and prosperity and reduce the risks of tensions and social unrest.*”

We are fully aware of the complex legal and political nature of the term “new minorities”. Some interpretations of the international law on minorities choose to limit the application of specific minority protection to citizens only. Other experts, however, advocate that international law affords minority rights also to newly resident minority groups and non-citizens. Ms. Gay MacDougall, the Independent Expert on Minority Issues at the UN, in her report last year to the UN Commission on Human Rights, stated that the duration of residence or domicile within a State does not limit protections under international standards relating to minorities. In other words, States are free, and encouraged, to extend minority protection to other individuals, notably non-citizens. Our reporting of the expose by Ambassador Vollebaek will credit him for having emphasized a pragmatic approach to this false dichotomy.

The concept of “integration with respect for diversity”, frequently referred to by the Office of the HCNM, implies a fundamental principle in international minority law which sets clear boundaries to integration policies in that they cannot lead to forced assimilation and abandoning one’s own specific identity. The Migration Policy Group’s report dwells on these issues and concludes that *“in some countries concerns about (too much) diversity causing societies to become fragmented and leading to a declining support for the welfare states are gaining ground. In others, debates centre round the difficulties in reconciling different value systems where diverse cultures and religions come into closer contact”*. These are important issues in contemporary societies, sometimes with a security dimension. Therefore, the issues raised in the report of the Migration Policy Group, such as integration versus diversity, the role the Government, equality and non-discrimination, participation in public life, the labor market, access to education, health care and other services deserve further follow-up both by the High Commissioner himself and by the governmental side of the OSCE.

In closing, let me deal with the interventions by the two NGOs advocating views as they see them relating to my country. There was not much that was new compared to their statements in earlier years. This is with the exception that the element of misrepresentation has grown and there has been no acknowledgement, not even grudgingly, of certain steps being taken by the Turkish authorities within the bounds of national legislation and international law. These repetitive comments will have been responded to and laid to rest by my interventions last year and the year before.

Thank you.