



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

High Commissioner on National Minorities

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Round Table

**"Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations
and their implementation in South-Eastern Europe"**

Ljubljana, Slovenia, 23 March 2009

Chairman's Summary

Representatives and experts from Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia met in Ljubljana on 23 March 2009 in order to discuss issues concerning national minorities in inter-State relations in South-Eastern Europe. The meeting was convened by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) in co-operation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia.

The Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations on National Minorities in inter-State relations, launched by the High Commissioner on National Minorities in October 2008, constituted the framework for the meeting. The purpose of these Recommendations is to provide representatives of States, national minorities and international organizations with guidance on how to address the questions concerning national minorities that arise in the context of inter-State relations in a way that protects and promotes the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, prevents conflict, maintains inter-ethnic harmony and strengthens good neighbourly relations. By encouraging States to make the right policy choices and take measures to alleviate tensions related to national minorities abroad, the aim is to advance the ultimate conflict prevention goal of the HCNM mandate. The deliberations in Ljubljana forms part of the HCNM effort to this end in South-Eastern Europe.

While the Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations are applicable throughout the OSCE area, their practical relevance may vary across different regions. The meeting in Ljubljana discussed how the Recommendations translate into the South-East European context. The participants shared views on areas of applicability and best practices. Against the background of different domestic circumstances, the wide range of bilateral relations, and emerging challenges in the broader international context - notably the financial and economic crisis - the deliberations underscored the importance of mutually acceptable standards to uphold the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and at the same time contribute to friendly inter-State relations.

At the meeting, the participants also heard introductory remarks by the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Minister for Slovenes Abroad, the Secretary-General of the OSCE and the representative of the Chairperson-in-office of the OSCE, followed by expert presentations. The meeting was the first in a series of expert round tables with the emphasis on the implementation of the Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations in specific regions where they could prove to be particularly relevant.