

Prohlášení
Statement
Déclaration

Vienna 18 June 2009

Permanent Council No. 765
EU Statement in response to the address by High Commissioner on
National Minorities, Ambassador Knut Vollebaek

The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Vollebaek back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his comprehensive report.

It is with great appreciation that the EU notes the continuation of Ambassador Vollebaek's travels in the first half of this year. In all his visits, he has conducted a wide range of talks with actors involved, and produced many concrete recommendations. His effective coordination with other OSCE structures and international partners is crucial in advancing the work of the OSCE as a whole.

The EU greatly welcomes the efforts the High Commissioner has put into counselling relevant actors in many participating States on the education of persons belonging to national minorities, helping integration and reducing tensions.

In this context, we would like to highlight the European Structural Funds, the Pre-accession Instrument, the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human rights, all promoting the inclusion of persons belonging to national minorities, also in the field of education. Furthermore, the Lifelong

Learning Programme (which includes 'Erasmus') in particular supports linguistic diversity in Member States.

The EU appreciates the dialogue of the High Commissioner regarding a number of different minority issues with its own member states.

The EU strongly supports the High Commissioner's increasing engagement in Georgia.

We commend his cooperation with the ODIHR on the 27 November 2008 report on the human rights situation in the war-affected areas in Georgia. We again call on all sides to implement its recommendations, including unhindered and unconditional access for humanitarian organizations and aid to South Ossetia, Georgia. We highlight the need for an OSCE follow-up to the report without undue delay. We regret that the High Commissioner was once again prevented access to South Ossetia, Georgia.

The EU shares the High Commissioner's concerns regarding the increasing pressure being put on ethnic Georgians in Abkhazia, Georgia. We agree that they must be able to exercise all their rights, including the rights to education and freedom of movement, and that they should not be alienated from the rest of Georgia.

We welcome the recent visit by the HCNM to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The EU attaches high importance to the development in Bosnia and Herzegovina of school curricula designed to educate tomorrow's leaders to become citizens committed to tolerance, democratic norms and respect for human rights.

We commend the close coordination between the HCNM and the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina to develop a National Minority Workbook.

The European Union remains committed to playing a leading role in ensuring stability in Kosovo, in a status-neutral manner, in accordance with UNSC Resolution 1244, through the EULEX Kosovo, the EUSR and its contribution to the international civilian office as part of the international presences. The European Union commends the High Commissioner for his role in respect of the Gorani community in Kosovo, where children are denied access to education.

The HCNM has played a complementary role to that of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo. The HCNM's visit to Kosovo in February this year to support the OSCE Mission in mediating a solution between the communities demonstrates how a field operation and the HCNM can work closely and in a coordinated manner to affect real change on the ground.

The EU supports the High Commissioner's engagement in South-Eastern Europe in general and is pleased with the emphasis he is putting on the issue of reversing segregation in education.

The EU is pleased to note the High Commissioner's continued involvement with Ukraine's Government on issue relating to inter-ethnic relations and encourages the state authorities as well as minority representatives to continue their co-operation with the High Commissioner. In this regard, we encourage the High Commissioner to look into adequate opportunities

for instruction of persons belonging to national minorities of their mother tongue or in their mother tongue.

We welcome the High Commissioner's activities in the Russian Federation, and also his parallel approach to addressing issues in Ukraine and Russia, which are closely linked to his Bolzano/Bozen recommendations on national minorities in inter-state relations.

The EU greatly appreciates the efforts of the High Commissioner to support dialogue and co-operation between the states of Central-Asia on minority issues, particularly in the sphere of minority education. His reference to a regional project resource centre, that would assist the implementation of recommendations that were made within the framework of the Inter-State Dialogue on Social Integration and National Minority Education in Central Asia, is welcomed in this regard.

We appreciate the High Commissioner's remarks on Roma and Sinti issues. The EU is conscious of its own responsibilities in this field. In this regard, the EU appreciates the emphasis that the Greek Chairmanship is placing on the issue of early education for Roma and Sinti children, and the Special Day that will be devoted to this at this year's HDIM.

The EU is approaching the upcoming Corfu informal ministerial meeting bearing in mind the importance of comprehensive security for the OSCE region. Therefore, the High Commissioner's remarks regarding the upcoming Corfu informal ministerial meeting are well noted.

In conclusion, we would like to thank Ambassador Vollebaek and his team for their dedicated work and wish them the best of success in their future activities.

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA* and FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, MONTENEGRO and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, as well as GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

*Croatia and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.