**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER ON NATIONAL
MINORITIES, AMBASSADOR KNUT VOLLEBÆK

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
8 November 2007

Mr Chairman,

My delegation is no less pleased than other delegations to welcome Ambassador Knut
Vollebæk to the Permanent Council for his first report in his new and important capacity
as High Commissioner on National Minorities. We also extend our most cordial
welcome back to our former colleague Ambassador Brandon Moran in his new capacity
as Director to the HCNM.

Norway acknowledges the past accomplishments of the office of the High
Commissioner, and we think the new High Commissioner is off to a very promising and
good start, with an impressive number of visits and contacts already undertaken. We
look forward to future updates regarding the situation in various participating States, and
underline our support for the important work carried out by the High Commissioner as
an instrument of early warning and conflict prevention.

Norway fully subscribes to the support voiced by the European Union and others for the
various activities presented in the report.

As regards the issue of finding the right balance between integration on the one hand
and respect for diversity on the other, we share the view of the High Commissioner that
this is one of the largest and most complex issues facing the entire OSCE community.

Accordingly, we appreciate the High Commissioner's readiness to participate in search for viable policies and practices.

In closing, Norway recognises the uniqueness of the High Commissioner's mandate in conflict prevention and early warning and the challenges that this creates. We assure the High Commissioner of our strong support for his office in protecting minority interests and defusing potential conflict situations related to minority issues across the OSCE region, and we will continue our close cooperation with Ambassador Vollebæk and his dedicated and competent staff.