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OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting Warsaw, 11-22 September 2017

Working session 10.1: Tolerance and non-discrimination I, including rights of persons belonging to national minorities, Roma and Sinti issues, including implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti, preventing aggressive nationalism, racism and chauvinism

Madame/Mister Chairperson,

I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The European Union welcomes the High Commissioner on National Minorities, Mr. Lamberto Zannier, to this OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in his new capacity. We would like to congratulate Mr. Zannier on his appointment and wish him every success in his endeavours. We commend Mr. Henrik Villadsen, Director and former Officer-in-Charge, and the HCNM team for continuing the excellent work of the Office, ensuring consistency in all aspects of the mandate in a historically unprecedented interlude without a High Commissioner.

We thank the High Commissioner for his presentation.

Our recommendations are:

- Participating States meet the commitment made by all OSCE participating States, without exception, to fully cooperate with the High Commissioner in order to enable the High Commissioner to fulfil its mandate. This includes granting HCNM full, free and unrestricted access.



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- Participating States extend an invitation to the HCNM and make full use of the expertise of this Institution. Quiet diplomacy, which the High Commissioner also implements, is complementary to public diplomacy and can help to bring results of lasting importance.
- 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.

Madame/Mister Chairperson,

The European Union strongly believes that protection of human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, is crucial for maintaining regional peace and stability. The rights of persons belonging to national and other minorities are an important aspect of our cooperation 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 membership of a minority group. This protection is bolstered by EU directives tackling discrimination.

The European Union considers the office and the mandate of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) to be of the utmost importance for the OSCE concept of comprehensive security. This autonomous institution is and should remain a core conflict prevention instrument for the whole OSCE area in providing early warning and seeking early action with regard to tensions involving national minorities.

The European Union attaches great importance to the work done in the areas of education, including in multilingual and integrated education, effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in public life, and policing in multi-ethnic societies. We commend the High Commissioner particularly for activities regarding these issues.



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The HCNM has accumulated a wealth of knowledge on national minority issues. Thematic recommendations and guidelines are an added value of the involvement of the HCNM in all areas of the OSCE. We support further use of these recommendations and guidelines by the participating States. We look forward to thematic work foreseen for the near future, such as recommendations on access to justice, which are currently being developed, as well as an updated version of the 'Guidelines on the Use of Minority Languages in the Broadcast Media' of 2003.

Madame/Mister Chairperson,

We welcome the HCNM's engagement in regard to the crisis in and around Ukraine. We have repeatedly expressed our concern about the deteriorating human rights situation on the Crimean Peninsula, in particular about the precarious position of both Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian-speaking communities after the illegal annexation of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation. Full compliance with international human rights standards and other obligations under international law must be ensured without delay. We are deeply concerned that the de facto authorities on the illegally annexed Crimean Peninsula have so far not accommodated requests from the High Commissioner to facilitate a visit to Crimea. We reiterate that the HCNM and other international human rights actors should be granted full, free and unrestricted access to the whole territory of Ukraine, including Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

We support the High Commissioner's engagement in the Western Balkans promoting long-term stability and the ongoing activities in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, in particular concerning language and education issues. Examples of this engagement include the strong involvement of the Office with issues that concern persons belonging to national minorities in the ongoing process of political and legislative reforms in Ukraine; the continuous engagement with the Republic of Moldova on the integration of society, while protecting minority languages and cultures and the monitoring of the situation of the Latin-script schools in the Transnistrian region and the implementation of a multilingual and integrated education system in Georgia.



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Madame/Mister Chairperson,

We once again express our full support for the office, mandate and autonomy of the High Commissioner and we reiterate the importance we attach to the protection of rights of persons belonging to national minorities. We look forward to fruitful discussions and a reinforced commitment by all participating States in the field of protecting these rights.

Thank you.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* 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 and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.