

**Address by Mr Ferenc Kalmár**  
**Ministerial Commissioner responsible for developing the neighbourhood of**  
**Hungary, MFAT**

Thank you Mr/Ms Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

While supporting the EU statement, let me add some remarks in my national capacity.

The issue of National minorities is fundamental when we deal with the European peace and stability. The documents adopted in the past for the regulation of this field are very important. This is the reason why I think, it is unfortunate that the two basic legal instruments adopted by the Council of Europe are not specified in the EU declaration. However, we should also take into account that these conventions are compulsory but not enforceable documents. Generally speaking, I consider that little progress in the field of national minority protection has been achieved in the past years. In order to avoid setbacks or to prevent progressive weakening of the results of the nineties it is an urgent need to establish a compulsory framework regulation in the EU, which could serve as an example for EU neighbourhood, too. We propose five basic principles to be considered and used for formulating the national minority protection framework of the EU:

1. The issue of national minorities is not an internal question but a European one.

The European states and institutions should deal with the situation and rights of autochthonous national minorities since this is one of the prerequisites of European peace and stability.

2. The basis/core element of national minority protection is the safeguard of the right to identity. It derives from the protection of human dignity and represents the basis of national minority protection.

3. Since identity has individual and collective dimensions, both individual and collective rights should be ensured. The often highlighted and promoted need for integration leads to assimilation for sure, without collective rights.
4. National identity and citizenship are separate notions but they are not necessarily antagonistic ones.
5. The autochthonous national minorities living on a certain territory should be considered as constituent elements of the state. Since they have been living on the same territory for centuries, they created values thus contributing to the development of the state regardless of the respective political powers.

Thank you for your attention.