



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT BY NORWAY

As delivered by Ambassador Hans Fredrik Lehne
to the OSCE Review Conference,
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Session 7: Tolerance and Non- Discrimination I

Mr. Moderator,

An adequate representation of persons belonging to minorities in policy and decision-making by society is instrumental in breaking the cycle of discrimination and exclusion suffered by members of these groups. Ensuring meaningful and informed participation and the management by minorities of matters directly affecting them, is a means to promote stability and integration.

Our experience is that the minority groups meet different obstacles when it comes to effective participation in decision-making processes. In this regard, I will emphasize the authorities' responsibility to find mechanisms of participation that suit the needs of the specific minority group. Further, such mechanisms should be developed in close dialogue with the group.

Various forms of dialogue have been established between the minority groups and the authorities in Norway. In order to empower the minorities as a dialogue partner, public grants are awarded to self organization and to minority institutions. Norway has recognized five national minorities: Jews, Roma, Romani people/tater, Kvens and Forest Finns. They are not a homogenous group and the various national minorities face a number of quite different challenges.

In recent years, the Norwegian authorities have made efforts to develop a coherent, inclusive policy for national minorities in Norway. The Contact Forum between the national minorities and the authorities was established in 2003 to meet the right to effective participation laid down in the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (art 15).

Because of the diversity and various interests among the national minorities, it is challenging to make the dialogue in the Forum fruitful for all groups. Some topics must rather be brought into a bilateral dialogue between the minority group concerned and state authorities.

I will end my presentation by underlining the important responsibility of the authorities for developing the framework conditions for a fruitful and effective dialogue with the minority groups. We therefore reiterate our proposal that the participating States adopt a political declaration endorsing the Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations and agree to adhere to their principles.

The Bolzano-Bozen recommendations are of great value in ensuring the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and, perhaps even more important, in promoting trust and cooperation between States. A food-for-thought paper on the Bolzano/Bozen recommendations was launched during the Corfu-process. We believe that the value of the recommendations would be further enhanced if they would be endorsed in a political declaration by the participating States.