



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting

OSCE Contribution to the Protection of National Minorities

Vienna, 29 – 30 October 2015

EU Statement

1. The European Union welcomes the organisation of a Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on the topic of protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. In the Treaty on European Union, article 2 states that "The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities." Therefore the protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities is an important aspect of the European Union's human rights policy.
2. Since the adoption of the EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy in 2012, the EU has been stepping up activities for the protection of the rights of persons belonging to National and other minorities, including Roma. The EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2015-2019 underscores the importance of cultivating an environment of non-discrimination inter alia through supporting partner countries' efforts and relevant initiatives by the UN, as well as regional organisations, aimed at protecting and promoting the rights of persons belonging to minorities and engaging with their representatives and civil society working on these issues.
3. The human rights of persons belonging to minorities are an important aspect of our policy cooperation with all our partner countries, including our closest neighbours and Eastern partners and are also consistently raised in our political and human rights dialogues. Tools developed by other relevant organisations such as the Council of Europe and the OSCE HCNM, including relevant guidelines and recommendations such as the Ljubljana Guidelines and the Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations, are an important reference point in such discussions.
4. The European Union provides support, in bilateral cooperation, for the fight against the discrimination of persons belonging to minorities and the promotion and protection of their rights takes place through the different



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geographic programmes that we have with our partner countries. Support for the rights of persons belonging to minorities is also an important objective of the European Instrument for Human Rights and Democracy (EIDHR) that primarily supports the activities of civil society. In order to strengthen the overall impact, we join forces with the United Nations and other international and multilateral organisations such as the OSCE and Council of Europe.

5. The European Union considers the office and the mandate of the HCNM to be of the utmost importance for the whole concept of comprehensive security of the OSCE. 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. We particularly commend and support the work of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, particularly in conflict affected areas. We welcome the High Commissioner's engagement in regard to the crisis in and around Ukraine and we share the ODIHR/HCNM human rights assessment mission's deep concern about the deteriorating human rights situation on the illegally annexed Crimean Peninsula. We have expressed our concern about the precarious position of both Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian-speaking communities after the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation. 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 Sevastopol.
6. We also commend the work of the Commissioner to promote the Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies and the Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations. We share the High Commissioner's position that manipulation of the real or perceived rights and interests of persons belonging to national minorities is counterproductive. Such actions treat minorities as instruments in a wider international political game and thus weaken the international regime for protecting the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. Therefore, any concerns with respect to the treatment of minorities should be addressed in accordance with international law and with full respect for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and good neighbourly relations.
7. To conclude we wish to underline that we remain committed to continuing our cooperation in the field of protection of minorities and the rights of persons belonging to minorities.