



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
High Commissioner on National Minorities**

STATEMENT

**Effective participation of national minorities in public life
– developing and concretizing practical forms of participation
drawing on the Lund Recommendations**

addressed by
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The promotion and development of effective institutions and mechanisms for participation by national minorities in public life have, from the very outset been among the leading objectives in the perspective of my conflict-prevention mandate. Dispatching the unrealistic idea of ethnically homogenous states, there is a vital need to develop practical forms of participation by minorities in the conduct of public affairs.

While establishing the position of High Commissioner on National Minorities, the HCNM, as “an instrument of conflict prevention at the earliest possible stage”, the Helsinki Decisions of July 1992 formulated explicitly the mandate to “take fully into account the availability of democratic means and international instruments to respond to it, and their utilization by the parties involved”.

In order to achieve these ends the HCNM launched an idea to elaborate a set of recommendations more specific than general standards, outlining different forms of effective participation of national minorities in the governance of States. The task was undertaken by a group of experts and 6 years ago, in June 1999, the Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life were published.

The Lund Recommendations develop and concretize the right of minorities to effective participation in public life which has been deeply embedded, albeit as a general principle, in modern human rights treaties and commitments undertaken by States participating in the CSCE/OSCE process. The recommendations offer a set of guidelines for coherent interpretation and application of a wide range of minority rights. For governments and civil society they may serve as a reference system for policy-making or legislative instruments. In this context the Lund Recommendations demonstrate effective ways and means to reconcile the interests of majority and minorities thus contributing to the preventing of conflicts between these groups.

The Lund Recommendations constitute a useful tool in addressing practical challenges in my conflict-prevention mission. The great merit of the Lund Recommendations lies in the fact that they bring together a wide range of forms of effective participation with potential applicability to national minorities in diversified domestic frameworks. As a set of purely recommendatory forms, they offer a high degree of flexibility.

The Lund Recommendations are also examples of an holistic approach, helping to address the lack of public participation of national minorities in all branches of governance – legislative,

executive, administrative and judicial, at all levels of the territorial organisation of states – from national to regional and local, and in the application of territorial and non-territorial arrangements as well as to social, economic, cultural and professional dimensions of public life. I believe, for instance, that the Lund Recommendations could be a useful tool in addressing Roma issues in many countries where Roma have traditionally been marginalized from mainstream public life at national and local levels.

A good example of successful practical application of the Lund Recommendations was an initiative which brought about the elaboration in 2000 of the Warsaw Guidelines to Assist National Minority Participation in the Electoral Process. These Guidelines were developed by ODIHR in conjunction with the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA). The Warsaw Guidelines translated the Lund Recommendations into a language of practical arrangements to assist national minorities in the electoral process. In this sense, the Guidelines resemble a sort of “implementary legislative tool”, which helps to put into practice the right of persons belonging to national minorities to take part in the conduct of public affairs, including through the rights to vote and to stand for office without discrimination.

What about future developments? I would like to share with you my perception of further needs in promoting wider and more effective participation of national minorities in public life.

Firstly, there are countries and regions in which the issue of developing the participation of national minorities in public life remains high on the agenda and is essential for the prevention of further inter-ethnic conflict, as is illustrated by the case of FYROM.

Secondly, one should continue to be aware of the ongoing elaboration and interpretation of the legal framework by national and international bodies. In this context, particular attention should be paid to the contribution of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which plays an important role in interpreting minority rights standards, including Article 15 on participation of national minorities in public affairs. The enhanced co-operation between the HCNM and the Council of Europe allows us to achieve further improvements to domestic arrangements for the representation and participation of national minorities in public life.

Thirdly, another issue which has arisen in several situations in which I have been involved is that of policing in multi-ethnic societies. In a number of States, I have encountered the absence of institutional mechanisms to support the interaction and co-operation between the police and persons belonging to national minorities. In combination

with the lack of appropriate training for operations in a multi-ethnic society, an often mono-ethnic composition of the police service and widespread discriminatory practices, the police has generated negative reactions among minorities in a number of countries and even become a conflict catalyst. In contrast, I have seen in other States how efforts which make the police service more representative of the community it serves and enhance communication between the police and national minority communities, not only strengthen inter-ethnic relations but also increase the operational effectiveness of the police.

Reflecting this important role of the police, the HCNM (in close co-operation with the Strategic Police Matters Unit in the OSCE Secretariat), collaborating with the directly responsible international organizations, is engaged in a process of analysis of the relevant international standards and practices in the area of policing with a view to elaborating practical recommendations/guidelines on policing in multi-ethnic societies. To this end, I have brought together a group of internationally recognized independent experts comprising representatives of relevant international organizations, along with consultants and non-governmental actors with particular expertise in this field. An initial meeting of experts was convened in June 2005 with a further expert meeting to develop a set of draft Recommendations/Guidelines on Policing in Multi-ethnic Societies taking place in October 2005. I expect to be able to endorse and make public a set of recommendations drawn up by the group of experts in the course of next year.

The Lund Recommendations have become a powerful tool. Through the enumeration of possible and suggested arrangements they not only filled a gap in the normative framework, but also emphasize the crucial importance for all democracies – new and old, East and West of Vienna, of a democratic culture which is based on inclusiveness and integration while respecting differences of culture, religion, language and historic perceptions. The participation of persons belonging to national minorities in all forms of public life is a precondition for such a mature and stable democratic culture. If established and protected, such participation can bring us closer to a genuinely inclusive democracy and to a peaceful Europe.

Last but not least, I would like to underline that the issue of the participation of persons belonging to national minorities in public life is part of a much wider debate which is currently taking place in most of the participating States. This debate concerns the question of **integration**. The aim of integration is to create a State where all individuals are able to interact freely and in which all have equal opportunities to participate and to benefit. Such an

integration policy is relevant not only for "traditional" or national minorities but also for migrants, or "new minorities" as they are sometimes called. These groups have a great deal in common, both in the problems they face and in the means available for resolving them. Both can be faced with problems caused by political, economic and social exclusion and both are concerned about the maintenance of their own culture. It has become increasingly accepted that economic, social and cultural marginalization of these groups has to be tackled with priority.

As I stated in my speech in the opening session of the HDIM last week, it is my opinion that the international community, the OSCE and indeed the HCNM, need to reflect on how these issues need to be addressed in order to prevent them from developing into serious societal confrontation. The principle of integration with respect for diversity, which I consider a cornerstone of the OSCE approach to international security, should be the basis for any proposed solution. As I have pointed out already, integration does not mean involuntary assimilation. It means living together, with tolerance and mutual respect for difference as regards culture, religion, language and historic perceptions. Integration in a multiethnic society of such differences is difficult and challenging. But is a necessity if the forces for separation and conflict are not to win out.