

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, 10 - 21 September 2018**

EU statement – Working Session 8: Tolerance and non-discrimination I (continued), including rights of persons belonging to national minorities, and preventing aggressive nationalism, racism and chauvinism

Mr. Moderator,

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

The European Union welcomes Mr. Henrik Villadsen, Director of the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, as well as guest speakers Dr. Petra Roter and Dr. Fernand de Varennes to this OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, and thanks them for their presentations.

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 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. We reiterate the importance of an effective implementation of legislation on the protection of persons belonging to national minorities and their non-discriminatory treatment throughout the territory of participating States.

We consider 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



EUROPEAN UNION

instrument for the whole OSCE area. 25 Years after its foundation, the institution of the HCNM is as relevant as ever.

The European Union supports the HCNM's active engagement throughout the OSCE region, aimed at providing early warning and early action in order to prevent tensions involving national minority issues from turning into conflict. We commend the HCNM for providing a neutral platform for dialogue, in order to find a way out of the deadlock. In addition, we welcome the HCNM's continued engagement with regard to language and education issues as well as efforts to improve sustainable integration of diverse and multi-ethnic societies, while at the same time preserving the respective ethnic identity of the communities concerned.

Our recommendations and questions are:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- We welcome the High Commissioner's continued focus on thematic work, and encourage the participating States to make full use of the rich body of advice thematic guidelines provide. We commend the HCNM on the events to mark the 10th anniversary of the Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations, as well as the 20th anniversary of the Oslo Recommendations, and look forward to hearing about



EUROPEAN UNION

follow up. We also anticipate the 20th anniversary events of the Lund Recommendations next year.

- In addition, we look forward to the 25th anniversary of the institution of the HCNM, which will be celebrated together with the Max van der Stoep Award on November 9.
- We appreciate the HCNM's continued close cooperation with other relevant structures of the OSCE as well as with other relevant international and regional institutions. We would welcome views on how to enhance the existing cooperation, for instance with regard to Roma and Sinti issues.

Madame/Mr Moderator,

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 commend the HCNM team for the continued excellent work. 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*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA and ANDORRA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.