



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE  
HIGH COMMISSIONER ON NATIONAL MINORITIES

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad to the Permanent Council  
Vienna, 4 June 2020

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chair,

Norway joins others in welcoming the High Commissioner on National Minorities, Ambassador Lamberto Zannier, back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his report.

The High Commissioner was established by the participating States as an instrument of conflict prevention at the earliest possible stage. His mandate grants a great deal of autonomy which must be respected and protected. States must allow him to act, travel and communicate according to his mandate without interference, including in occupied and disputed territory. The High Commissioner, along with his office, is an autonomous institution of the OSCE.

We have repeatedly noted our expectation that the activities of the High Commissioner are compliant with his specific commitments under the Gender Action Plan to address issues relating to the participation in public and private life of women belonging to national minorities. Systematically addressing gender-specific considerations, as well as

Page 1 of 2

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

gender mainstreaming the thematic work, allows the High Commissioner more effectively to fulfil his mandate.

The ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming is gender equality. However, in the first instance, the mainstreaming of a gender perspective is not about equality. It is about assessing the implications for women and men of our planned actions and policies. It is about making women's, as well as men's, concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of what we do.

We appreciate the signs of gender mainstreaming in the report. In particular in the reporting on the Central Asia Education Programme, which appears to show that a gender perspective has contributed to increasing the number of graduations among girls from national minorities. Applying a gender perspective to the analysis of the Covid-19 pandemic is also important.

Responding to the pandemic remains a central task for states across our region. As the High Commissioner's report indicates, this has also proven a challenge to diverse societies. It is important that all measures be communicated clearly to all parts of the population, including minorities. Political and religious leaders must not take part in any expressions of hate, stigmatisation or encouragement of discrimination, violence or attacks against any minorities. They should rather counter them publicly.

As noted by the High Commissioner, we must take care to ensure that minorities are equally eligible under measures to mitigate the socio-economic impact of Covid-19. Humanitarian and social response to the pandemic should provide assistance across ethnic, religious and other boundaries, and take advantage of opportunities that can contribute to greater social cohesion. To support this in our efforts to help countering the pandemic, Norway has decided to give priority to organisations that have been willing and able to work in an inclusive and non-discriminatory manner.

Thank you