



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1482 Vienna, 11 July 2024

EU Statement in Response to the Report by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Amb. Kairat Abdrakhmanov

1. The European Union welcomes High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov, back to the Permanent Council.
2. The EU reiterates its support for the mandate of the autonomous institution HCNM. Providing early warning and seeking early action with regard to tensions involving persons belonging to national minorities is central to the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security.
3. We highly value the HCNM's crucial role in protecting our principles and commitments, including through clear messages when these are violated. Against the backdrop of Russia's unprovoked, unjustifiable and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, the active engagement of the HCNM is more important than ever.
4. We share your concern about the situation of the people living in those parts of Ukraine temporarily and illegally occupied by the Russian Federation. Russia must comply with its international human rights obligations, including those related to persons belonging to national minorities. We underscore that Russia's actions and measures aimed at forcibly assimilating the local Ukrainian population could seriously undermine any prospects for a just and sustainable peace in the future. We condemn the forced conscription of residents of the Ukrainian territories temporarily under Russian military control into the Russian Armed Forces. Such conscription campaigns may amount to

a gross violation of international humanitarian law under which an occupying power is prohibited from forcing protected persons to serve in its armed or auxiliary forces.

5. The Russian Federation has further violated its obligation under IHL by imposing its legal and administrative systems, including its educational system and curriculum, in the Ukrainian territories it temporarily and illegally occupies. This imposed curriculum fails to comply with IHRL standards, requiring education to be culturally appropriate and to respect the child's own cultural identity, language and values. Particular attention needs to be paid to Ukrainian children, who are also the target of Russian re-education and indoctrination policies, as well as militarisation.
6. We emphasise that the presence of persons belonging to Russian speaking or other minorities on the territory of another state must not be exploited as justification for undermining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of that state. Russia's practice of forcibly issuing Russian passports to Ukrainian citizens in the territories it temporarily and illegally occupies is a flagrant violation of international law. Russia further violates the rights of such citizens, making access to public services, healthcare, employment, and property rights contingent on holding a Russian passport, as reported *inter alia* by ODIHR.
7. Furthermore, the EU reiterates its strong condemnation and does not recognise the results of the illegal so-called "presidential elections" in the territories of Ukraine that Russia has temporarily occupied. These actions constitute yet another violation of international law, including the UN Charter, and undermine Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.
8. The EU strongly believes that the protection of human rights, including those of persons belonging to national minorities, is crucial for maintaining regional peace and stability. The EU remains committed to ensuring the rights already exercised by persons belonging to national minorities, as enshrined in the applicable UN and Council of Europe Conventions, related protocols, and OSCE commitments on non-discrimination and respect for diversity.
9. Recalling the EU Human Rights Guidelines on Non-discrimination in External Action, we reiterate that 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. We also reiterate the importance of the effective implementation of legislation on the protection of human rights, including those of persons belonging to national minorities, and their non-discriminatory treatment throughout the territory of participating States.

10. The EU attaches great importance to the unhindered work of civil society organisations. We are concerned about potential restrictions on access to information and barriers to dialogue that so-called “foreign agent” laws may create. We are keen to hear your assessment regarding their impact on the participation of national minorities in public life in diverse societies.
11. We commend the HCNM’s efforts to improve sustainable integration of diverse and multi-ethnic societies, as well as political representation of persons belonging to national minorities. It is vital that the institutions representing these persons function without undue political interference. We welcome HCNM’s work with regard to effective implementation of legal frameworks on the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. This includes the continued engagement in addressing language and education issues, facilitating dialogue, promoting effective participation in public affairs including through consultative mechanisms, safeguarding property rights, ensuring access to media, and upholding the right to practice a religion in the mother tongue of persons belonging to national minorities, where applicable.
12. We reiterate our support for the thematic work of the HCNM. We encourage all participating States to make use of the HCNM’s recommendations and guidelines. We commend your commitment to taking a gender-sensitive approach in HCNM activities, and welcome your attention to youth.
13. We appreciate your continued cooperation with other OSCE structures and relevant international and regional institutions, in particular the EU and the UN, and welcome your engagement with the Council of Europe and its Venice Commission.

14. As the High Commissioner approaches the completion of his tenure, we thank him and his dedicated team for their much needed work, and wish them every success.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.