



United States Mission to the OSCE

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Rights of persons belonging to national minorities, including: National minorities; Preventing aggressive nationalism, racism and chauvinism

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Beyond the challenge of integrating persons belonging to minorities while respecting their human rights, including the rights to enjoy their own culture, to practice their own religion, and to use their own language, this session examines the larger issue of aggressive nationalism and chauvinism. All states must work to end the victimization of members of national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities and to prevent prejudices within their own borders from fostering extremism, hatred, and violence directed toward the peoples of neighboring states. The multiple experiences of inter-ethnic and inter-state violence during the last century prove that localized nationalism can metastasize, creating damage from which it can take entire regions decades to recover.

The conflicts that raged through the Western Balkans beginning in 1991 and ending 10 years later provide contemporary examples of aggressive nationalism and ethnic chauvinism. Even today, mass graves are being uncovered and victims continue to be identified by surviving families. Atrocities remain to be investigated, and perpetrators are still being brought to trial for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide after years of evading justice.

The United States calls on all States in the region, including Kosovo, to continue to work toward reconciliation. Unfortunately, Kosovo is still prevented from participating as a State in the OSCE. Nevertheless, we continue to support the EULEX Special Investigative Task Force in its work to investigate, and if necessary, prosecute allegations of serious crimes, including organ trafficking, in Kosovo and Albania in 1999. The United States has contributed significant resources to the EULEX task force investigating this case and is committed to seeing justice prevail.

Despite precedent-setting documentation, forensics, and a legal framework established in response to the Balkan conflicts, it is disturbing that the tragic and particularly horrific nature of atrocities committed during these conflicts continue to be denied, distorted, and rationalized by political leaders. To our great dismay, Serbia's new President Tomislav Nikolic denied the 1995 genocide in Srebrenica in public remarks shortly after he came into office. Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik has also engaged in public denial of the atrocities. The genocide is not

just a matter of opinion; it is documented fact. The United States deplors such denials, which undermine the reconciliation that is essential to further progress toward long-term peace and stability in the region.

Of course, aggressive nationalism and ethnic chauvinism are not confined to the Western Balkans. They have also manifested themselves in many of the protracted conflicts in the OSCE region, resulting in ethnic cleansing and hindering ongoing efforts by the OSCE and others to bring such conflicts to a peaceful resolution.

My delegation also believes that aggressive nationalism and chauvinism should not be criticized only when large-scale violence is the result. Efforts by government officials to exercise influence and authority beyond their borders in other states—in what the OSCE High Commissioner Vollebaek politely calls “kin-state activism”—can in some circumstances constitute manifestations of aggressive nationalism and ethnic chauvinism with unforeseen consequences.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, for example, advised ethnic Hungarian citizens of Romania on whether to participate in a recent referendum in that country, while members of the Hungarian Parliament convened a “national cohesion” committee meeting in neighboring Slovakia. While non-violent, these actions are nonetheless provocative and undercut friendly and good neighborly relations among states. Moreover, this focus on ethnic Hungarians in neighboring states contrasts with the Hungarian Government’s own tepid response to anti-Semitism, as well as threats and violence against the Roma within Hungary. To quote the High Commissioner: “As a guiding principle, States should not be more interested in minorities residing in neighboring States than those residing within their own borders.”

The extension by some OSCE states of citizenship, voting rights and even direct representation in parliaments to citizens of neighboring states based on ethnicity does not itself transgress OSCE commitments, but can, depending on the context, give us reason to be concerned.

I wish to conclude my remarks on this topic by noting the centennial birthday of Raoul Wallenberg just two months ago, in early August. As a Swedish diplomat in Budapest during World War II, he saved thousands upon thousands of Jews from extermination, putting himself at direct risk in the process. We can, at best, only imagine what we would have done as diplomats in his place, but we must, at the very least, oppose here and now the acceptance of aggressive nationalism, chauvinism, exclusivity, and extremism that continue to plague our societies today.