



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1026 Vienna, 20 November 2014**

---

#### **EU statement in response to the Report by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Ms. Astrid Thors**

---

The European Union warmly welcomes High Commissioner Astrid Thors back to the Permanent Council and thanks her for her comprehensive report on recent activities.

The EU highlights its support for the office and the mandate of the High Commissioner. We reiterate the importance we attach to the respect of rights of persons belonging to national minorities. We call on all OSCE participating States to respect the mandate of the HCNM and to co-operate closely with her office on all matters related to national minorities and to make full use of its expertise. Quiet diplomacy, which characterises the work of the High Commissioner, is less visible to the public but brings results of lasting importance. We reiterate that the HCNM should have the necessary means to fulfil her mandate.

We commend the work done in the areas of education, including in multilingual and integrated education, effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in public life as well as policing in multi-ethnic societies.

We also see the need for developing effective policies for integration of persons belonging to minorities as an essential aspect of a tolerant and stable society. We commend the High Commissioner for her activities in promoting the Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies and the Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations. Any concerns in respect to minorities should be addressed with full respect for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and good neighbourly relations. We are also grateful for the HCNM's timely focus on the

need to ensure full respect for the commitments of the Helsinki Final Act at this year's HDIM.

We welcome the HCNM's engagement in regard to the crisis in and around Ukraine, and note the HCNM's recommendations to the Government of Ukraine on language and identity issues. The EU would like to make the following points in the context of the situation in and around Ukraine.

First, the EU believes that a renewed inclusive, country-wide national dialogue on reforms, involving all stakeholders from all the regions of Ukraine will be important to consolidate Ukraine's unity and internal cohesion. However, any dialogue requires a readiness to engage on all sides. The rights of persons belonging to national minorities need to be fully ensured in line with the relevant international standards, including those of the OSCE and the Council of Europe. We welcome the commitment of the Government of Ukraine in this regard. We reiterate our continuing concern about the widespread violations of rights in parts of eastern and southern Ukraine controlled by pro-Russian separatists including denying people the possibility to vote in the recent Rada elections.

Second, we share the High Commissioner's deep concern about the deteriorating human rights situation on the Crimean peninsula. We have many times expressed our concern about the precarious position of both the Crimean Tatar and the Ukrainian-speaking communities after the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation. We are concerned about continuing reports, which the HCNM also bears witness to, of disappearances, police raids and arrests. We condemn in particular the persecution and intimidation of the Tatar community, including cases of kidnapping, torturing and killing of young male Crimean Tatars. We share the High Commissioner's view that the authorities in effective control of Crimea appear to be pursuing a deliberate policy to undermine and marginalise the self-governance structure of the Crimean Tatars, including through the eviction of the Mejlis from its premises in Simferopol and interrogations of its activists.

Third, we would like to hear the High Commissioner's assessment of the imposition of Russian citizenship in Crimea, and how this relates to the Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations. We share the HCNM's view that the denial of basic rights may also increase the risk of inter-ethnic conflict on the Crimean peninsula. We reiterate that the HCNM and other international human rights actors should be granted full, free and unrestricted access to the whole territory of Ukraine, including Crimea and Sevastopol.

We support the High Commissioner's activities in Serbia in this reporting period in the fields of education, minority languages and ethnic minority culture, in close cooperation with the Serbian authorities.

We welcome her visit to Albania, the first visit by a High Commissioner since 1994. Progress has been made concerning the protection of rights of persons belonging to national minorities and we encourage the authorities to enhance the dialogue with representatives of these minorities.

We share the High Commissioner's concern that the situation of minorities in Kyrgyzstan remains precarious and we call upon the authorities to enhance their efforts to promote integration and build a cohesive multi-ethnic society. We commend the High Commissioner for her active engagement in Tajikistan, in particular activities concerning the Central Asia Education Programme. The situation concerning minority communities remains a concern to us. We are pleased that the Government of Tajikistan's response to the violence in Khorog in May 2014 was measured and encourage the authorities to implement the agreements that were reached with civil society.

Finally, we thank Ms. Thors and her staff for their excellent work and once again express our full support for the High Commissioner and her team.

Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE and the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA align themselves with this statement.

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

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.