



Address by OSCE Chair-in-Office, Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta Ian Borg, for the 2024 Max van der Stoel Award

Excellencies,
Former OSCE High Commissioners on National Minorities
HCNM Director and Officer in Charge, Ambassador Marek Szczygiel
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor to address you today, albeit from a distance, for the presentation of the 2024 Max van der Stoel Award. This award, established by the Government of the Netherlands and organized by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, celebrates the legacy of Max van der Stoel, a distinguished statesman and the first OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. His work laid the foundation for our Organization's efforts to promote the rights of national minorities and prevent ethnic tensions and conflicts.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Dutch Government for their unwavering commitment to this cause, as well as to the former High Commissioners present today, and to HCNM Director and Officer in Charge Marek Szczygiel. Their tireless efforts ensure that the rights of national minorities remain at the forefront of our collective agenda. The dedicated work of these individuals, often behind the scenes, plays a crucial role in preventing conflict and promoting stability across the OSCE region.

Today, we recognize Natur og Ungdom from Norway for their outstanding achievements in giving young people a voice in environmental policy while championing the rights of the Sámi community. This award highlights the intersection between environmental sustainability and the protection of minority rights - two issues that are increasingly interconnected.

National minorities often face unique challenges, and their voices must be heard, particularly when it comes to decisions that impact their way of life and the environment they depend on. Natur og Ungdom's work exemplifies how we can build bridges between communities to address these challenges collaboratively. I am confident that your efforts will continue to inspire others and that this award will serve as recognition of your ongoing contributions.

Congratulations once again to Natur og Ungdom. Let us continue to embrace diversity as a source of strength and work towards a future where all people, regardless of their background, can thrive in just and inclusive societies.

Thank you.