

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, 16 - 27 September 2019**

EU statement – Working Session 12: Tolerance and non-discrimination II, including address by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities; Rights of persons belonging to national minorities

Mr. Moderator,

I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The European Union strongly believes that protection of human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, is crucial for maintaining regional peace and stability. The rights of persons belonging to national minorities are an important aspect of our cooperation with all our partner countries, including our closest neighbours, and are consistently raised in our political and human rights dialogues. Within the EU, Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights prohibits discrimination on any ground including membership of a minority group. This protection is bolstered by EU directives tackling discrimination.

The EU remains committed to ensuring the rights already exercised by persons belonging to national minorities, as enshrined in the applicable UN, Council of Europe Conventions and related protocols and in OSCE commitments on non-discrimination and respect for diversity.

Also, the EU adopted in March 2019 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 reiterate the importance of an 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.



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We consider the office and the mandate of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) to be of the utmost importance for the OSCE concept of comprehensive security. This autonomous institution is and should remain a core conflict prevention instrument for the whole OSCE area.

The European Union supports the HCNM's active engagement throughout the OSCE region, and commends efforts to improve sustainable integration of diverse and multi-ethnic societies, as well as political representation of persons belonging to national minorities.

We welcome this session's attention on youth. The OSCE Declaration on the Role of Youth in Contributing to Peace and Security Efforts, MC.DOC/3/18, acknowledges that youth are an important part of society, and they can play an important role in supporting participating States in the implementation of commitments in all three dimensions.

Already the Copenhagen Document (1990) underlined that "participating States will respect the right of persons belonging to national minorities to effective participation in public affairs, including participation in the affairs relating to the protection and promotion of the identity of such minorities." The "HCNM Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life" (1999) – which 20th anniversary we will celebrate in two months' time – built upon this. It highlights that "Effective participation of national minorities in public life is an essential component of a peaceful and democratic society". Therefore, it is essential to strengthen the role of persons belonging to national minorities, including youth and women.

Our recommendations and questions are:

- How can meaningful participation of youth, including political participation, be strengthened across the three OSCE dimensions?
- We encourage participating States to make full use of the rich body of advice thematic guidelines provide. We look forward to the 20th anniversary in November of "The HCNM Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life".



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- We reiterate that States have a duty to respect internationally recognized human rights and the rule of law, which allow for the full development of civil society in conditions of tolerance, peace, and prosperity. When specific institutions are established to ensure the effective participation of minorities in public life, which can include the exercise of authority or responsibility by such institutions, they must respect the human rights of all those affected, as mentioned in the Lund Recommendations.
- We appreciate the HCNM's continued close cooperation with other relevant structures of the OSCE as well as with other relevant international and regional institutions. We would welcome views on how to enhance the existing cooperation, for instance with regard to Roma and Sinti issues.
- We welcome the HCNM's focus on effective implementation of legal frameworks on the rights of persons belonging to minorities, in line with international standards and commitments and also his engagement with regard to language and education issues, access to media and the right to profess and practice a religion in a mother tongue, dialogue facilitation, as well as effective participation in public affairs and property rights of persons belonging to national minorities.
- We reiterate that the protection of the rights and freedoms of persons belonging to national minorities forms an integral part of the international protection of human rights, therefore they should be able to exercise fully and effectively their human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination and in full equality before the law.

Mr. Moderator,

We once again express our full support for the office, mandate and autonomy of the High Commissioner, and we commend the HCNM team for the continued excellent work. We look forward to fruitful discussions and a reinforced commitment by all participating States in the field of protecting these rights.

Thank you.



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The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ARMENIA, GEORGIA and ANDORRA align themselves with this statement.

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