

15th Anniversary Conference of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities' *Recommendations on Policing in Multi-Ethnic Societies*

Opening Remarks by Ambassador Alena Kupchyna, Co-ordinator of Activities to Address Transnational Threats

Excellences,
Distinguished participants,

Dear High Commissioner Abdrakhmanov,
Dear Ambassador Jevrell,
Dear Senator Cardin,

- It is a pleasure to address you today on behalf of our Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid at the 15th Anniversary Conference of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities' *Recommendations on Policing in Multi-Ethnic Societies*.
- Promoting and protecting the rights, interests and aspirations of national minorities are the precondition for conflict prevention, peace and security across the entire OSCE region and beyond.
- We are grateful to the HCNM for the excellent co-operation in the organization of today's event and for their tireless work in promoting the rights of minorities in all aspects of social, economic and cultural life and public affairs, including police work.
- Police remains one of the most important services to provide security in our diverse societies. Therefore, promoting the development of an inclusive, transparent and accountable police system is at the core of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security. An integral part of this work is to support police-public partnerships that foster trust and joint problem solving in multi-ethnic and minority communities.

- The OSCE's policing mandate lies not only in assisting law enforcement agencies of participating States in addressing threats posed by criminal activity, but also in ensuring respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The essence of policing is to serve and protect its citizens, including minorities.
- The implementation of the *Recommendations on Policing in Multi-Ethnic Societies* is relevant today as when they were first published 15 years ago: diversity within our societies is growing and if left unattended and not governed well, it could result in the risk of divisions along the lines of identity, leading to exclusion and marginalization, ultimately creating preconditions for tensions, thus challenging security between and within pS.
- Besides a rise in diversity, driven also by global increasing migration, fuelled by conflict, instability and climate change, social media is another factor, which, if left unattended and not governed well, has the potential to enhance inter-ethnic tensions.
- Experts have emphasized that online hate speech against minorities is increasing, amplifying negative views and sentiments against minorities, even escalating into hate crime. The pandemic has spurred a new wave of anti-minority sentiments and a growing level of hostility against minorities online. For example, online Roma and Sinti were persistently blamed for spreading or causing COVID-19. This emphasizes that promoting integration, tolerance and non-discrimination of minorities in multi-ethnic societies is more relevant than ever.
- Many pS are currently undertaking police reform processes, to better serve their communities and increase security. We deem it important to use this opportunity to call for the OSCE pS and Partners to make full use of these recommendations, as they remain an important tool to ensure police are fulfilling their tasks in compliance with human rights, including minority rights.
- The recommendations are also mutually beneficial: on one hand minorities benefit from policing, which is more sensitive to their concerns and more responsive to their individual requirements for personal protection and

access to justice, while, on the other hand, police benefits from greater operational effectiveness given to closer communication and co-operation with minority communities.

- Let me provide you with some concrete examples: the OSCE, both the Transnational Threats Department and our field operations, advises pS on how to recruit, train and develop police services that are more representative of the communities they serve. In this regard, the OSCE especially focuses on initiatives to increase recruitment of underrepresented minorities in security and law-enforcement agencies, removing any direct or indirect discriminatory barriers.
- To ensure sustainability, ownership and replication of knowledge, we place special emphasis on the integration of training modules focused on minority issues and inter-ethnic relations in training curricula of police academies.
- Furthermore, our priority lies in training criminal justice practitioners in a way to ensure their impartial and non-discriminatory enforcement of the law among all ethnic communities.
- One of the most effective approaches to increase trust between police and the community they serve remains community policing.
- Within its framework, the OSCE provides capacity building initiatives for pS on how to foster constructive engagement with all ethnic communities. Through these strengthened communication and co-operation efforts between minorities and the police, we seek to systematically increase minorities' level of participation in enhancing conflict prevention, safety and social cohesion within communities.
- A concrete example of the application of community policing in multi-ethnic societies stems from the field of hate crime. Among many successful examples, let me recognize the work of the OSCE Mission to Serbia. It is providing support to the Commissioner for Protection of Equality and the Ministry of Interior in raising the capacities of police officers on issues relating to anti-discrimination and understanding hate crime on the basis of race, gender, religion, language, political affiliations, national origin, property, birth or other status. The Mission has been

working with law enforcement on introducing the topic of identification and handling of hate crimes.

- The OSCE field presences and executive structures are also supporting pS in successfully applying gender-sensitive community policing practices in multi-ethnic societies in the context of preventing terrorism and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (P/VERLT).
- They have found that community policing in the context of preventing terrorism represents a powerful tool to improve relations between police and minorities, improving minorities' vigilance and resilience against VERLT and facilitating a timely identification and referral of critical situations.
- I would like to conclude by reiterating that we remain highly committed to continue to support pS in implementing the High Commissioner's recommendations on *Policing in Multi-Ethnic Societies*.
- Thank you for your kind attention, commitment and support and I wish you a rich and productive discussion!