



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Secretariat**

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Conference Services

At the request of the OSCE Delegation of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the attached statement in response to the address of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Amb. Knut Vollebaek, made at the 765th Meeting of the Permanent Council on 18 June 2009, is being distributed to all OSCE delegation.



**765th meeting of the Permanent Council
Statement by Nenad Kolev, Head of Mission**

Madam Chairperson,

The Republic of Macedonia too warmly welcomes High Commissioner on National Minorities H.E. Knut Vollebaek and thanks him for his comprehensive report. We have just associated ourselves with the EU statement. Let me now make some additional comments in my national capacity.

Mr Vollebaek,

What you do is highly commendable. My country has the highest respect and admiration for your efforts.

Please rest assured that we truly believe that integrated education is to the benefit of my country. We subscribe fully to your words that education is one of the main instruments in promoting integration and as such can heal wounds, prevent conflicts and contribute to sustainable societies in the long term. It is with this in mind that you were welcomed in Skopje in January of this year, meeting the country's highest officials as well as parliamentarians, representatives of national minorities, civil society organisations, municipal authorities, and the heads of the 2 high schools in Struga where interethnic incidents had taken place. During your visit you stressed that Macedonia had made headway in the past few years in some key areas of education, including mother-tongue tuition, the depoliticisation of education and increased parental involvement in local municipalities. You also warned my authorities about the negative consequences of segregated education on society, stressing that the progress above should not be undercut by increased ethnic segregation - a word also used in the EU and US statements of this morning.

Whereas we agree with the essence of your point, may I kindly suggest, Excellency, that the term segregation be avoided because it does not describe appropriately the issue at hand in my country. We already had this semantical debate here in Vienna on 2 June, when I outlined our arguments to this effect. The Struga incidents constitute an isolated case of temporary separation which, frankly, does not reflect the much more positive reality in the country's education system. In addition, segregation evokes a sense and images of apartheid and deliberate ethnic discrimination on a massive scale and according to a pre-conceived evil plan. What is more, the Government is undertaking urgent measures to resolve the issue and is determined for the mixed-shift classes to resume in the upcoming school year once the new or renovated school building is made available after summer. I am confident that the next time you come visit the PC the Struga case will have been long resolved. We are grateful to you for your involvement and assistance to ameliorate these problems.

Mr. HCNM, we also stress your important work regarding the Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations. Much like you, we too think that this subject warrants further attention and awareness raising among Participating states.

Excellency, I wish you and your team the best of success in your future endeavours.