



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe  
High Commissioner on National Minorities**

**STATEMENT**

by  
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to the  
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**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegations,

I would like to use this opportunity today to brief you on my activities and visits since I last addressed you on 29 June.

One month ago, I visited **Ukraine**, including the Autonomous Republic of **Crimea**. The primary focus of my trip was to discuss minority related issues with the President and the new governments both in Kyiv and in Simferopol.

Concerning inter-ethnic relations in Crimea and the integration of Crimean Tatars into Ukrainian society, problems still remain particularly in the areas of housing, infrastructure, employment and education as well as with regard to the land property rights of Crimean Tatars. The practice of illegal seizure of land on the popular southern coast has spread considerably. With this in mind, I discussed the Draft Law on the restoration of rights of persons deported on ethnic grounds which in my view would contribute to the establishment of a transparent legal basis regarding the status and rights of formerly deported peoples, including their property rights.

Considering the need to facilitate harmonious inter-ethnic relations between the communities on the peninsula, last month I launched a project on the management of inter-ethnic relations in Crimea. Based on the methodology applied in previous projects I have initiated in Kyrgyzstan and Georgia, the new project will involve training seminars for local civil servants and representatives of local ethnic communities with the aim of promoting mutual tolerance, trust and co-operation. I will also be exploring ways in which to help address the complex issue of language education in Crimea. A balanced approach allowing the educational needs of all communities is of utmost importance for inter-ethnic harmony.

In Crimea, I also raised the sensitive issue of policing which, in my experience, is of great significance in multi-ethnic regions. I shall seek to initiate a dialogue in Crimea on international standards and best practice in the area of policing, using the recently published HCNM Recommendations on Policing in Multi-Ethnic Societies as a basis.

In addition to the situation in Crimea, I addressed issues of minority and language policy. I noticed a commitment on the part of the Ukrainian Government to finalize the amendments to

its minority legislation, and I will continue assisting Ukraine in this process. I also offered my assistance with regard to language policy which remains one of the most contentious issues in Ukrainian society. I understand that a certain consensus has emerged among political leaders not to move ahead with the changes in language legislation at this stage.

Another topic of my discussion with President Yushchenko was the initiative of **Ukraine and Romania** to jointly monitor the situation of Romanians in Ukraine and Ukrainians in Romania. I have rendered assistance during the first stage of this initiative which took place in October-November, underlining that issues of reciprocal kin-minorities are best addressed through close bilateral co-operation. In this respect, it is my belief that the Romanian-Ukrainian joint monitoring mission sets an important example in Europe, and I intend to continue my support of this initiative.

The week after my visit to Ukraine, I travelled to **Georgia**, and met with Prime Minister Noghaideli, the Deputy Chairman of the parliament and other senior Georgian officials.

During my visit, I noted that the Georgian leadership is conscious of the fact that respect for the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and their integration into Georgian society are preconditions for the stability and peaceful development of Georgia as an independent and prosperous state.

My interlocutors stressed that the Georgian Government attaches great importance to the issue of national minorities in the country and quoted numerous measures implemented by the authorities to improve the social and economic situation in the regions of Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli compactly populated by Armenian and Azeri minority respectively. This year, the Government has renovated dozens of schools and kindergartens and reconstructed many roads. In the recently held municipal elections, ethnic minorities received election-related information in their mother tongue and the Central Election Commission set up a hotline operating in six languages, which people could call free-of-charge to make inquiries. The establishment, last December, of the Zurab Zhvania School of Public Administration, which will provide training for persons belonging to national minorities and others, and the ratification by Georgia of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities during the same month, were quoted as other positive examples of the Government's concern for minorities.

The Government, with the assistance of the Council of Europe, has recently prepared a Draft Law on repatriation of persons deported from Georgia in the 1940s by the Soviet regime. The draft will be submitted in the coming weeks to the parliament for adoption. I welcome this measure, addressing primarily the plight of the Meshketians, and also encouraged the Government to ratify the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages and to develop its law on national minorities – two other commitments made by Georgia on its accession to the Council of Europe. I am ready to provide the Georgian Government with advice and expertise in further drafting of the above-mentioned laws.

The Georgian Government appreciated my wide ranging conflict prevention and civic integration activities in Georgia, in particular my projects in the regions of Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli. In addition to the eleven projects already being implemented in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region, I have launched six projects in Kvemo-Kartli replicating the successful activities carried out in Samtskhe-Javakheti.

Prime Minister Noghaideli voiced his interest in my Recommendations on Policing in Multi-Ethnic Societies and asked me to consider developing some concrete projects in this domain for implementation in Georgia.

In September, I visited Belgrade, **Serbia and Kosovo** as a follow-up to my visits to the region in January and February this year. My dialogue with the Serbian Government remains open and constructive. I raised the need for the redoubling of efforts to promote integration of national minorities in several areas such as public administration, education, the police and the political sphere. While some progress has been made in these areas, I believe that the authorities should continue to take a proactive stance in order to achieve further improvement, especially in South Serbia and Vojvodina. I also raised with interlocutors the need to initiate a process aimed at reconciliation among Kosovo's communities, for which broad support was expressed.

In **Kosovo**, the main focus of my visit was the issue of initiating a process of reconciliation for Kosovo as a way of providing assistance to the on-going international efforts in support of community rights and promoting improved relations between communities. It is my firm belief that a long-term, structured and systematic approach to seeking truth and achieving

reconciliation in Kosovo must be sought if a Kosovo free from fear, distrust and mutual recriminations is to become a reality.

In order to explore such grounds for reconciliation and provide key actors with the tools to take such a process forward, I convened a meeting in Stockholm in October on promoting reconciliation in Kosovo. The goal of this initial meeting was to establish a common language which could be used to discuss reconciliation and issues of transitional justice. The participants included key political and civil society leaders and opinion makers from both the Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serbian communities. It was encouraging that all agreed that there was a great need to move forward with a process aimed at promoting reconciliation regardless of the question of status. I intend to follow this event with a series of similar meetings to be held sometime in the first six months of 2007.

While much of my work in South Eastern Europe of late has focused on the situation in Serbia and Kosovo, I continue to follow the situation in **Croatia** closely. In particular the implementation of the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities; proportional representation in the state administration and the judiciary; and the educational situation in a number of schools in Eastern Slavonia. There has been progress in all of these areas. However, further steps should be considered in order to build on the results achieved so far.

I have also followed the situation in respect to national minorities in both **Montenegro** and the **Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, especially in light of elections held in both of those countries in recent months. I hope to visit both States in 2007 in order to offer assistance to the authorities in their efforts to ensure that the needs of all citizens are addressed.

Mr. Chairman,

In my last address to the Permanent Council on 29 June, I informed the Delegations of my plans to host high-level consultations in The Hague in July on **Social Integration and National Minority Education in the States of Central Asia**. During the consultations which took place on 14 July, the participants from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan agreed to organize a ministerial conference devoted to the issue of education as a means of social integration. In this context, it is my pleasure to inform you that next week, on 28 November, I am, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public

Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, holding the conference in Tashkent on *The Challenge of Educational Reform in Multi-Ethnic Central Asia*. Within the framework of this conference, the Education Ministers of the States of Central Asia – together with representatives of the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan and the Russian Federation and the principal donor organizations in the area of education – will share their views on how to develop a process of ongoing co-operation on education which will lead to practical measures to strengthen the modernization process of education in Central Asia and further promote social integration within Central Asia's multi-ethnic states. Co-operation in areas such as teacher training and the development of curricula and textbooks, as well as mutual recognition of qualifications and the exchange of experience when introducing modern methodology – including distance learning, interactive methods of language teaching and multi-lingual education – might become essential elements of the future dialogue.

In connection with the conference I will also take the opportunity to continue my dialogue with the **Uzbek** authorities on the situation of national minorities in the country and the region.

Within the framework of my ongoing co-operation with the Committee on Languages of **Kazakhstan**, I commissioned a consultant to elaborate a set of recommendations for the Kazakh authorities on the best way to advance the knowledge of the State (Kazakh) language in Kazakhstan, while respecting the linguistic and educational rights of persons belonging to national minorities. This entails the effective methodological support of a sustainable State language acquisition system for the adult population of Kazakhstan. The recommendations have been presented to the authorities in Astana and will serve as the basis for discussions on further co-operation between the HCNM and the Committee on Languages of Kazakhstan.

In **Kyrgyzstan**, I continue to work closely with the Ministry of the Interior on enhancing co-operation and communication between the police service and persons belonging to national minorities. Following a successful joint conference with the Ministry of the Interior on 2 June 2006, the Interior Minister and I signed a memorandum of understanding under which Human Resources (HR) Departments have been assigned the function of minority focal points. In October, the HCNM organized a workshop for the staff of the Interior Ministry's HR Departments in order to discuss various modes of police-minority communication and measures to increase minority representation in the police service of Kyrgyzstan, and to

develop a concrete plan of activities for the coming months. I am encouraged by the outcome of the workshop which not only demonstrated the Ministry's genuine interest in building a relationship of trust and confidence with the country's ethnic communities, but also highlighted the need to intensify recruitment activities within minority communities in order to address the falling minority representation in the country's police service.

As I have informed the Permanent Council in the past, my co-operation with the Kyrgyzstan Interior Ministry also includes training programmes in the management of the sensitive situation with regard to inter-ethnic relations in Southern Kyrgyzstan. These courses are regularly offered to police cadets from the Osh Specialized Secondary Police School and to operational officers from the three southern regions of the country in order to equip them with the knowledge and tools to operate in a multi-ethnic society, to increase their sensitivity to minority concerns and, ultimately, to improve their operational effectiveness.

Mr. Chairman, I was pleased to learn about the plans to include the OSCE Police Assistance Programme in the 2007 Unified Budget of the OSCE Centre in Bishkek. Through my contact with the management staff of the Kyrgyz police, I have witnessed their determination and commitment to effect change in their organization. Certainty about funding will undoubtedly help achieve the desired results in the medium- to long-term, including the multi-ethnic policing initiatives which the HCNM and the OSCE Centre in Bishkek implement in close partnership.

My other priority area in Kyrgyzstan is education. I assist the Kyrgyz authorities in the implementation of the 2004 Report and Recommendations of the Working Group on Integration through Education and, within the framework of this co-operation, I support the activities of the Multicultural Education Sector of the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth Policy of Kyrgyzstan tasked with advancing this agenda in the country. One of the dimensions of the Sector's activities is bilingual and multilingual education which has now gained particular prominence as a result of a new provision in the new Kyrgyz Constitution obliging the education authorities to ensure proficiency in the State language among secondary school graduates.

Mr. Chairman,

In 2002, I commissioned two experts to elaborate guidelines for the implementation of the State Language Law in **Latvia** with the aim of enhancing the capabilities of the implementing agency – the State Language Inspectorate – to apply and implement the law in a just and legitimate manner. Today, I have the pleasure to inform you that the experts have completed their work and that a Practical Implementation Guide for the State language inspectors was presented in Riga a week ago during a training seminar for language inspectors. The purpose of the Guide is to assist the State Language Centre and the language inspectors in their task of achieving a balanced and effective implementation of the State Language Law, taking account of relevant national and international legislation.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me now say a few words on HCNM co-operation with other international institutions, which is important as it adds value, impact and strength to my work.

In early autumn, I addressed a seminar entitled *Operational Conflict Prevention* at the **United Nations** Headquarters in New York. The event coincided with the presentation of Secretary-General Kofi Annan's second report on the prevention of armed conflict, in which the OSCE and the HCNM were highlighted as instruments for conflict prevention. I regularly meet with officials in the UN Secretariat and other UN specialized bodies, and the Secretariat has demonstrated a growing interest in drawing upon the experience of the HCNM in developing practical tools of conflict prevention – including mediation support – at a UN level.

As the OSCE's "focal point" on national minorities within the framework of **enhanced co-operation with the Council of Europe (CoE)**, I have continued to develop close contacts with the various structures of the CoE. In October, I organized a joint information seminar on the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages here in Vienna with the Charter's Secretariat. The seminar gathered representatives from seven countries, who have committed to ratifying the Charter upon accession to the Council of Europe, but have not yet done so. The aim of the seminar was to assist the governments in the ratification process by providing information on the meaning and content of the Charter in order to clarify existing obstacles and misunderstandings. In the same month, I also participated in a seminar on national minorities and education organized under the Chairmanship of the Russian Federation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. It presented an opportunity to examine the latest developments relating to the protection of national minorities, in particular in the field



of education, and also marked the tenth anniversary of the publication of The Hague Recommendations regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities.

Furthermore, the publication of a joint **OSCE-CoE compilation on minority rights standards**, which I announced in my speech before the Permanent Council on 9 February this year, is now ready for printing. The publication constitutes a compilation of existing OSCE and CoE political commitments, legal standards and guidelines. It will be an important and useful reference work for policy makers and practitioners, highlighting the accomplished work of both the OSCE and the CoE in the area of national minorities.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the past years, I have developed close links with the **European Commission**, in particular with the Commissioner for Enlargement and the Directorate-General dealing with the enlargement of the European Union and membership negotiations with candidate countries. As you are all well aware, the 1993 Copenhagen Criteria laying down the membership criteria of the European Union requires that any State wanting to join the EU must ensure stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities. Against this backdrop, the European Commission has seen a need to complement its own capacity by drawing on the expertise of the HCNM in the area of minority standards and minority rights. The HCNM is looked upon as an instrument for assisting governments of candidate countries to bring their domestic policy, legislation and practice in line with international standards and best practice to promote respect and protection of minorities.

Mr Chairman,

During my last appearance at the Permanent Council in June, I informed you of my intention to present a **study I commissioned on the matter of integration policies in diverse societies** to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. This study had been requested by the Assembly, who repeatedly called upon me to "initiate a comparative study of the integration policies of established democracies and analyse the effect on the position of new minorities".

The study, entitled *Policies on integration and diversity in some OSCE participating States*, was duly presented, along with my own analysis, at the July 2006 session of the Parliamentary Assembly in Brussels. A Brussels-based research institute which regularly

carries out independent research on the issues of migration, integration, diversity and non-discrimination – Migration Policy Group – conducted the study. It covers the integration policies of seven Western democracies – namely Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom – selected on the basis of their substantial experience of implementing integration policies and the fact that their policies are well documented and accessible to researchers. The report examines all fundamental aspects of these integration policies concerning non-discrimination, political participation, labour market integration and access to education, health care and housing. It also examines policies that deal with the increasing ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity of the societies concerned.

As the study demonstrates, there are many ways of defining those to whom integration policies can be applied, ranging from persons belonging to national minorities to recently arrived migrants. Rather than engaging in a controversial discussion on issues of definition, the study focuses on the "how" of integration rather than the "who".

The study highlights the existence of a common policy framework for the integration of persons belonging to national minorities and migrants which underlies both the HCNM's approach and those followed by the countries who are the subject of the study. At the heart of this approach of "integration respecting diversity" – which is the basis for all my activities – lies the idea that States need to encourage participation in the political, social, economic and cultural life of mainstream society with a view to developing a sense of belonging, while at the same time protecting the rights of all persons to maintain their own identity including their culture, language and religion. The study also provides examples of "best practices" in this field and could be a sourcebook for policy makers.

I hope that the report will serve as an inspiration for ongoing discussion and an exchange of experiences among participating States, and I look forward to working closely with the upcoming Spanish Chairmanship, which has already decided to make the issue of "Diversity and Participation in Pluralistic Societies" one of the key agenda points for next years debates and activities.

Thank you.