



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **Response to the Report by the High Commissioner on National Minorities, Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov**

As delivered by Ambassador Michael Carpenter  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
December 8, 2022

High Commissioner Abdrakhmanov, dear Kairat, welcome back to the permanent council, in remarks you delivered earlier this year you predicted that “minority issues will continue to be instrumentalized and politicized.” You were right. A mere two weeks later, Vladimir Putin called for the mobilization of 300,000 new troops, mostly drafted from minority regions and impacting minority populations, to help him to conduct his illegal and unjustified war against Ukraine. Immediately thereafter, Putin engineered a series of sham referenda in eastern Ukraine in an attempt to illegally annex several of Ukraine’s territories – a cynical and perverse ploy to transform Ukrainians into a minority in their own country, or worse, to deny their Ukrainian identity entirely.

We share your alarm about reports that Crimean Tatars are being disproportionately selected for conscription. The nonprofit organization CrimeaSOS has evidence that in some places as many as 90 percent of men receiving conscription notices were ethnic Crimean Tatars, despite the fact that they comprise only 13-15 percent of the entire population of Crimea and rarely more than 60 percent even of traditional Tatar villages. The same is true of other national minorities, who are dying in Ukraine at disproportionately high rates. According to the Free Buryatia Foundation, the chances of a Buryat dying in the war in Ukraine in October was 7.8 times higher than that of an ethnic Russian, and a Tuvan was 10.4 times more likely to die.

One does not even have to be a citizen of the Russian Federation to be forced to fight in Putin’s war. The nonprofit organization Tong Jahoni reported in October a surge in requests for assistance from Central Asian migrants living in Russia, some claiming they were detained, physically or economically coerced, or tricked into military service. This war is not just an imperial war of conquest, it’s also a war waged with and against national minorities.

High Commissioner, my government was pleased to welcome you to the United States in October, and to know you appreciated the openness of the officials and civil society groups with whom you met. We are also pleased you intend, as we encouraged you to do, to place greater emphasis on addressing racism in the OSCE region, including in my own country. We have to call out and condemn racism whenever we see it. We deeply regret, for example, comments by the Hungarian Prime Minister decrying the “mixing of races.” My country sees diversity as a strength, and we take our commitments to the rights of persons belonging to minority groups very seriously. As a demonstration of this commitment, Secretary Blinken appointed Desiree Cormier-Smith as Special Envoy on Racial Equity and Justice to ensure U.S. foreign policy protects and advances the human rights of people belonging to marginalized racial and ethnic communities, including indigenous communities

and people of African descent. The road towards greater tolerance and non-discrimination requires effort and determination, and it's a path that we must all walk together.

We also continue to have concerns about rising nationalism across the OSCE region, including in the Western Balkan countries, where nationalism is being fanned and exploited both by local and outside actors, including the Russian Federation. In January, the United States sanctioned Milorad Dodik, currently president of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Republika Srpska entity, for corrupt and destabilizing activity. Since then, we have also designated another seven individuals – incidentally representing all of Bosnia and Herzegovina's constituent peoples – for their corrupt, destabilizing, and anti-Dayton activities. On a more positive note, we welcomed the agreement on November 23 between Kosovo and Serbia to avoid further escalation and to concentrate on normalizing their relations under the EU-facilitated Dialogue.

We urge all participating States to develop and implement policies which promote the protection and participation of national minorities, including Roma, and facilitate inclusive processes of governance that involve all members of the population without discrimination in order to foster societal cohesion. The OSCE's field missions offer a robust toolkit for building this cohesion and we applaud their efforts to do so.

We welcome your awarding the 2022 Max van der Stoep Award to the civil society organization "Social Justice Center" for its work to ensure all Georgians enjoy equal social, political, and economic opportunities. We value your office's continued cooperation with the OSCE Mission to Moldova to help fully implement the National Strategy for Consolidation of Inter-ethnic Relations and promote multilingual education in Gagauzia. We also encourage you to engage with Azerbaijan and Armenia to advance the peace process between these two countries in a way that protects the rights of national minorities and fosters social cohesion.

Finally, we welcome your engagement in Central Asia to promote regional stability and security, sustainable development, and economic growth. We echo calls for Uzbekistan to ensure that the rights of members of ethnic minority groups in the Autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan are respected. We also call for the rights of ethnic Pamirs and other minorities to be respected and safeguarded in Tajikistan. Finally, we encourage your continued close monitoring of the situation on the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border in light of recent tensions and in line with the early warning aspects of your mandate.

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