



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

STATEMENT

address by
Rolf Ekéus

OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

to the

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**"Demographic Trends, Migration and Integrating Persons
belonging to National Minorities:
Ensuring Security and Sustainable Development
in the OSCE Area"**

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Mr. Chairman,

It is a great pleasure for me to address the Economic Forum. As the High Commissioner on National Minorities, my work is not normally thought to be closely associated with that of the economic and environmental dimension. However, the concept of integration is central to my work in dealing with minorities. It is also central to the theme which the chairmanship has chosen for this forum. This illustrates again both the comprehensive nature and the indivisibility of the OSCE's concept of security. Our common aim is to prevent conflicts by identifying their root causes and eliminating or neutralising them before they lead to conflict. Among the root causes are economic and environmental problems, human rights abuses and the problems of minorities. Tackling these issues is complex and difficult but immensely worthwhile. Even a small reduction in violence, instability and conflict brings great benefits. Whatever reforms may be needed in the OSCE, there should be no cutting back of its work in the field of conflict prevention where it provides an example for other regional organisations and for the UN. It would be particularly unfortunate if the OSCE drew back, just when the reformers of the UN have made a strong plea for an increase in the work on conflict prevention.

My mandate requires me to identify and deal with minority issues which give rise to tensions and risks of conflict. The experience which my predecessor and I have acquired in carrying out this mandate has led to the development of some techniques and principles for dealing with minority problems. Some of these have been published in the form of recommendations developed by independent experts in the fields of language, education, minority participation and broadcasting in minority languages. The central thread which binds all these recommendations together is the concept of integration or, to avoid misunderstanding, **integration respecting diversity**. I will outline the part which integration plays in my work before looking at its relevance to other OSCE priorities, including migration which is, I understand, the main focus of your discussion.

Concerning the relationship between the work I do with established minorities and the issues raised by what are sometimes called the "new" minorities consisting of migrants. There is a great deal in common between new and established minorities both in the problems they face and in the means of resolving them. Both are likely to be concerned about political economic and social exclusion and about the maintenance of their own culture. In both cases the

solution lies in integration of minorities into a multi-ethnic, multicultural society while respecting their right to maintain their own culture. The key issues to be dealt with, such as minority participation in political and economic life and education are the same for both categories. There is also a large overlap between the international legal framework for new and established minorities. For all these reasons I am convinced that there is much scope for useful interaction between those who deal with established minorities and those who deal with "new" minorities.

At the same time, there are real differences. My experience is that tensions which may lead to conflicts most often arise in situations involving established minorities. My mandate is about conflict prevention and I believe that in choosing my priorities I should continue to look to the areas where risks of conflict are greatest.

Why "integration respecting diversity"? **First, integration.** My mandate is to address tensions between minorities and majorities that can threaten stability or lead to conflict. Most often those tensions arise from the exclusion of groups or communities from the society of the State and the benefits it provides. Failure to deal with such exclusion can lead to a vicious circle in which isolation and alienation reduce the benefits of belonging to the State leading to a deepening of deprivation. The end result of this cycle of exclusion and deprivation can be a community which is a breeding ground for crime, extremism and even terrorism. It is best countered by a policy of integration aimed at forming a society where all individuals are able to interact freely, in which all have equal opportunities to participate and to benefit so that the tensions arising from minority issues can be contained or eliminated.

Second, diversity. A policy to promote integration can take many forms and needs to be implemented with sensitivity if it is to gain the acceptance of the minority, without which it cannot succeed. In particular it must respect the minority's right, upheld by international law, to maintain their identity, including their language and culture. This is why I prefer to describe the policy I advocate as "integration respecting diversity".

What are the alternatives to a policy of integration respecting diversity? On the one hand, forced assimilation which involves requiring the minority to abandon their culture and values in favour of that of the majority. Even in the case of small and weak minorities, such as those consisting of recent immigrants, such a policy is unlikely to promote harmony in the longer term. On the other hand, separation. South African apartheid was a form of separation which infringed universal human rights. However, separation can be a solution in special

circumstances, where there is support for such a solution on both sides. But in the majority of cases, the pursuit of separate solutions is more likely to promote tension than harmony.

But integration is not just the least bad solution to the problems of exclusion. It benefits the State not only by strengthening security but by supporting prosperity, justice and human rights and cultural diversity as well.

First, security. Minorities who are genuinely integrated will naturally have loyalty to a society in which their identity is respected and in which they can participate on a non-discriminatory basis in economic and political life. Participation will generate a sense of belonging and responsibility. Minorities will have no reason to look elsewhere for opportunities or for solutions to their problems if these can be found within the State in which they reside.

Second, prosperity. A healthy economy can only fulfil its potential by maximising the contribution of all, including minority members. Good governance requires states to create a non-discriminatory framework in which there is equal opportunity for all to fulfil their potential. Economic integration is in the interest of the majority as well as the minority.

Third, justice and human rights. Integration can only be achieved on a basis of equality and non-discrimination. I would like to underline the point that a policy of integration means the integration of all persons residing on the territory of a State, whether they are citizens or not. The risks of alienation or isolation leading to tensions, which a policy of integration seeks to combat, are not confined to citizens. Indeed such tensions may well be exacerbated by the absence of citizenship. Under International law the duty of States to protect fundamental human rights and freedoms, including minority rights, likewise applies to all persons resident on their territories, whether citizens or not.

Fourth, diversity. In a genuinely multicultural society, with a climate of tolerance and dialogue the whole society is enriched by the chance to enjoy the cultures of all groups.

As I have already indicated, the key to achieving integration is for governments to promote participation. Integration involves minority participation in all the key areas of the life of the State: political life, economic and social life and cultural life. The crucial means of promoting participation are education and the media.

Participation in political life is the first condition for the development of a sense of belonging which is the basis for loyalty and responsibility. Persons from minorities who see

that they have an effective voice in making decisions at all levels of government, particularly on matters which directly affect them will look to the State for the solution to these problems.

Participation in the economic and social life of the State is also crucial since it enables persons from minorities to look within the State for opportunities. This means, first and foremost, that minorities should have a fair share of the benefits which the State provides, for example in terms of employment opportunities. This may, on occasions, require special measures by the State to enable deprived groups to catch-up with the general level.

Cultural participation involves the creation of a multicultural society in which all cultures are valued and appreciated. It is sometimes suggested that a multicultural society requires common values. This is true of certain basic values such as respect for human rights, including the rights for children and women, tolerance, non-discrimination and for the rule of law. These basic values are underpinned by international legal instruments. But so is respect for diversity.

Education is the first step in equipping minority children to participate in the life of the State and language is a key element. Of course it is important for minorities to have access to their mother tongue, but without a good ability to communicate in the State language members of minorities would be unable to participate effectively in the political and economic life of the State. They may even fail to qualify for higher education. This is why a number of my projects are directed at strengthening the skills of minority students in the State language in order to enable them to be successful in competing for places in higher education. Education also lays the foundations of a multicultural society. It is also in education that children acquire or develop for good or ill, their attitudes to other groups. The dangers of developing group hostility and stereotypes needs to be combated either through integrated schools or, at least, by promoting contacts between students of different groups.

In addition to education, **the media**, particularly the broadcast media have a crucial role to play in informing minorities about the life of the State and facilitating their participation in it. Broadcasting in minority languages has a particularly important part to play when minority knowledge of the State language is limited.

Mr. Chairman,

I have outlined the main features of the policy of "integration respecting diversity" which I have developed as a result of my experience in dealing with National Minorities. Let me turn now to the debate about the treatment of migrants or, as they are sometimes called, new minorities. This is a highly topical subject which is at the heart of political debate in many of

our countries and it is through these political pressures that the answer will have to be formed. I will limit myself to three fundamental points.

First, the handling of diversity is not a subject which is going away. On the contrary the cultural variety of our societies has been increasing steadily over recent decades as a result of increasing migration. Globalisation and demographic pressure will ensure that migration will continue to grow and that diversity continues to increase. Migrants already outnumber national minorities in some states. This means that we all have to come to terms with the multi-ethnic, multicultural state. The world has suffered enough problems from the idea of an ethnically pure nation state and this concept is now dead and should be buried.

Second, I believe that a policy of integration respecting diversity is just as appropriate for new minorities as for established minorities. Migrants, like members of established minorities should be encouraged to participate fully and should be helped to acquire the necessary skills, such as linguistic skills to do so. They should be encouraged to participate in all walks of national life including culture but also to maintain and develop their own culture. As in the case of national minorities, integration requires new minorities to share certain basic values such as tolerance non discrimination and respect for law with the majority. But a harmonious society does not require the imposition of common values on matters of day-to-day customs and behaviour, as long as fundamental human rights are respected, including the rights of children and women.

Third and finally, I would like to see the OSCE take these issues forward. I have identified the basic principles of a policy of integration respecting diversity which are important for my work on national minorities. They may have a wider application. I do not think the principles I have identified – the need to promote participation in political, economic and cultural life, through education and the media – are controversial. I believe that these subjects deserve further work and attention by the OSCE and that there would be benefit for participating States in taking this discussion forward in the OSCE with a view to refining our concept of integration and, if possible, developing a set of principles which could be endorsed by the organization as a whole. I would like to suggest that the Economic Forum should endorse a Recommendation on these issues.