



UNITED NATIONS
GENEVA

OSCE
HCNM

30
YEARS

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

Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG)

High Commissioner on National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE HCNM)

Roundtable

Promoting Conflict Prevention

through the Socio-Economic Inclusion of Minorities

15 November 2023, 10:00-13:00 (Geneva Time), Room XXI, Palais des Nations

Concept Note

In recognition of the conflict prevention mandate of the High Commissioner on National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE HCNM), as well as numerous obligations and pledges made at the United Nations¹ to increase socio-economic inclusion for national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities, a roundtable event entitled “Promoting Conflict Prevention through the Socio-Economic Inclusion of Minorities” will be held on 15 November 2023 to address the effective participation of minorities in social and economic life as a key strategy for conflict prevention.

Supported jointly by the OSCE HCNM and the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, this roundtable serves as a continuation of an earlier joint endeavour undertaken by both institutions in 2021. The latter culminated in a high-level event entitled “The Effective Participation of Minorities in Economic Life as a Strategy for Conflict Prevention” on 21 November 2021 at the UN Office at Geneva². The objective on that occasion was to convene esteemed experts and representatives from international organizations to better understand how to create fair policies that effectively tackle social and economic challenges experienced by minority communities.

As a follow-up to the aforementioned event, the OSCE HCNM subsequently undertook numerous initiatives, including the preparation of a new set of HCNM thematic recommendations that focus on ways to increase the social and economic participation of national minorities³. This upcoming roundtable will discuss the relevance of the measures and policy approaches envisaged in this document, in the context of the UN Sustainable

¹ Including the [Recommendations of the Forum on Minority Issues](#) adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2011, focusing on minorities’ effective participation in economic life.

² See: [OSCE and UN promote socio-economic inclusion of minorities as a strategy for conflict prevention | OSCE](#).

³ <https://www.osce.org/hcnm/socio-economic-recommendations>

Development Goals (SDGs) and other UN frameworks that could prevent the escalation of social and inter-ethnic tensions. A specific focus will be given to the socio-economic inclusion of minority youth and women.

More specifically, the event aims to better understand the challenges in this regard and to reflect on how to achieve a more inclusive socio-economic-cultural balance in the future, leaving no one behind. Panelists will discuss lessons learned and best practices, especially in the post-pandemic setting, and propose relevant approaches for inclusive socio-economic policies. The panel debate and the subsequent Q&A session are designed to encourage participants to discuss positive actions to counter the economic marginalization and exclusion of minorities, in line with the relevant SDGs, as well as recommendations and guidelines developed by the OSCE HCNM⁴.

Programme

Introductory Remarks:

- **Ms. Tatiana Valovaya**, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva
- **Mr. Volker Türk**, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- **Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov**, High Commissioner on National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Moderator: Iryna Ulasiuk, Head of CIS and Baltics Section, HCNM

Roundtable:

- **Ms. Tatiana Molcean**, Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
- **Ms. Nathalie Chuard**, Ambassador, Director, DCAF – Geneva Center for Security Sector Governance
- **Mr. Patrick Eba**, Deputy Director in the Division of International Protection, UNHCR
- **Mr. Hernan Vales**, Chief, Indigenous Peoples and Minorities Section, OHCHR
- **Dr. Fernand de Varennes**, UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues (2017-2023)
- **Dr. Jennifer Jackson-Preece**, Associate Professor in Nationalism, European Institute of the London School of Economics and Political Science

Discussion

Moderator: Elzbieta Kuzborska-Pacha, Senior Legal Adviser, HCNM

⁴ A full list of the OSCE HCNM guidelines and recommendations is available at:

<https://www.osce.org/hcnm/thematic-recommendations-and-guidelines>

The Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life (1999, OSCE HCNM) specifically aim to facilitate the inclusion of minorities within the public sphere of a State.

Background note on the office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

Leaving no one behind (LNOB) is the central theme and promise of the UN 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. Minorities tend to figure disproportionately among those most likely to be left behind. Most often, women from disadvantaged minority groups in particular face social exclusion, particularly in education and the health services. It is therefore of paramount importance to focus on intersecting forms of discrimination since they exacerbate the marginalization of minority and indigenous groups, in particular women and girls. Without more decisive action, the inequality that minorities are facing in society will be perpetuated and their exclusion from social and economic development will remain.

It is self-evident that the peace and stability of a society are intricately linked to the active inclusion of minorities in public life, particularly within the economic realm. The systematic or perceived marginalization of specific identity groups, as well as violations of the human rights of minority communities, can intensify inter-ethnic mistrust, fear, and competition for limited resources, ultimately leading to violent conflicts. These consequences can be further exacerbated by the socio-economic and environmental impacts of climate change. To counter exclusion and create new opportunities for minorities to play a significant role in public life, interventions that embrace diversity and foster dialogue with marginalized groups are essential.

Conversely, when minorities are actively involved in public life, including the economic sphere, all voices are heard, fostering a sense of belonging and promoting cohesion in multi-ethnic societies. Equal economic opportunities, including for the youth, contribute to overall economic prosperity, peace, and security.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the opening of the office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities in The Hague. The High Commissioner's position was originally established 30 years ago as a conflict prevention mechanism, and today the High Commissioner continues to play a crucial role in addressing inter-ethnic tensions at an early stage and promoting long-term societal integration throughout the OSCE region. One of the key focus areas of the High Commissioner is how to promote the effective participation of minorities in social and economic life. This anniversary offers an opportunity for the OSCE HCNM and other multilateral partners to take stock of different experiences and approaches towards preventive diplomacy with a particular focus on the sustainable integration of diverse societies.