



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE  
HIGH COMMISSIONER ON NATIONAL MINORITIES

Delivered by Chargé d’Affaires a.i. Henning Hj. Johansen at the Permanent Council  
Vienna, 3 June 2021

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madame Chair,

Norway joins others in welcoming Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov and thanks him for his first report to the Permanent Council. We have taken positive note of his high level of activity during the first six months as High Commissioner on National Minorities. We are also pleased to hear that he continues to be enthusiastic about this work, which is appreciated by the colleagues and staff in the Hague.

Norway attaches great importance to the work of all three OSCE institutions and asks that their budgets are sufficient for them to carry out their tasks. We took note of the HCNMs presentation on the coming year’s priorities in the Programme Outline-discussions, and we will look positively on a request from the HCNM for a modest increase in the budget for 2022.

We are pleased to see that the report brings attention to a wide range of activities across different themes and approaches. The High Commissioner on National Minorities is mandated to provide early warning and early action to prevent ethnic tensions from developing into conflict. As such the mandate falls clearly under the OSCE’s first dimension of security. However, ethnic tensions are often a result of challenges related to human rights and economic exclusion. As such, the work of the High Commissioner is solidly connected to all the OSCE’s three dimensions of security.

Confidentiality, both of process and of substance, is important to the High Commissioner and required by his mandate. We do not, and should not, expect every activity of the High Commissioner to be made public. That is the nature of quiet diplomacy. Allow me nevertheless, to state that we are pleased to see that the report gives a comprehensive picture of activities and concerns. We encourage the High Commissioner to continue offering his assistance to authorities in countries that experience an increase in ethnic tensions.

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The pandemic caused by Covid-19 has severely impacted the work of the High Commissioner, but we are happy to see that activities have been adjusted to new formats and secured continuity over the last year.

More alarming, the pandemic continues to have disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups, among them ethnic minorities. We appreciate that the High Commissioner has continued the work started in 2020, on recommendations to participating States on how to mitigate negative effects of Covid-19. We are especially pleased to see the emphasis on youth and gender in this aspect.

The High Commissioner has specific commitments under the Gender Action Plan. It falls within his mandate to address issues relating to the participation in public and private life of women belonging to national minorities. We highly value the systematic approach to this in his work, as described in the report to this Council. We are also pleased to note a substantial emphasis on matters related to gender equality in general. We believe this will allow the High Commissioner, more effectively, to fulfil his mandate.

In chairing the Human Dimension Committee this year, the Norwegian delegation has enjoyed the assistance of the High Commissioner and his staff in the preparation of several meetings. We look forward to welcoming him again to a committee meeting this autumn.

Thank you.