



United States Mission to the OSCE

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

As delivered by Political Counselor Elisabeth Rosenstock-Siller
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 6, 2023

High Commissioner Abdrakhmanov, welcome back to the Permanent Council for your third report in this 30th anniversary year of the HCNM. We were pleased to have an opportunity for direct dialogue during your visit to Washington, D.C. last fall.

The United States agrees with your appeal to preserve avenues that facilitate dialogue for peace and protect fundamental rights and welcomes your recognition that the “war against Ukraine” – that is, Russia’s war against Ukraine – has cost lives and livelihoods. For nearly 10 years, Russia has abused and repressed Ukraine’s Crimean Tatars, ethnic Ukrainians, and members of other ethnic and religious community groups in areas temporarily under its control. Since your previous address to the Permanent Council in July 2022, Russia has continued its unprovoked and brutal war of aggression against Ukraine – the biggest and most devastating conflict in Europe since the Second World War. What has become increasingly clear since your last report is that Russia is separating Ukraine’s children from their families, uprooting them from their homes, and then subjecting them to systematic pro-Russia information campaigns often amounting to targeted reeducation. This was well documented in the OSCE Moscow Mechanism mission report from May 4. The OSCE and its independent institutions have not stood idly by as Russia attempts to exploit and instrumentalize Ukraine’s ethnic diversity to destabilize the country and provide a false pretext and justification for its unjustifiable war of aggression. And the OSCE should fully use all the tools in its toolbox. We support your continued dialogue with representatives of minorities and with the authorities of both Ukraine and Russia on Russia’s attempts to assimilate individuals against their will and erase their identities in Russia-occupied territories. It is an effective use of your mandate to call out these and other horrific atrocities Russia is carrying out in Ukraine

High Commissioner, actions centered on ethno-nationalist ideologies have led to destabilizing activity in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republika Srpska National Assembly adopted an anti-democratic law that violates the constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina and threatens not just the rule of law but the security and stability of the State. The United States strongly supports the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and multiethnic character of Bosnia and Herzegovina and we will continue to hold individuals facilitating and undermining democracy to account. Actions taken by the governments of both Kosovo and Serbia have escalated ethnic tensions in northern Kosovo. We again call on both Serbia and Kosovo to follow the three-point plan outlined by the EU and return to the EU-facilitated Dialogue without delay.

The United States appreciates the efforts of your office to promote multilingual education, including in Ukraine. We welcome your cooperation during these trying times with the OSCE Mission to Moldova to strengthen the implementation of the country’s “National

Strategy for the Consolidation of Inter-Ethnic Relations” and with partners in Georgia to increase opportunities for members of national minorities in the political arena. Elsewhere in the South Caucasus region, we support opportunities to help strengthen the rights and security of individuals living in conflict-affected areas as Azerbaijan and Armenia work towards a peace agreement. We also welcome your ongoing dialogue with Albania, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan during the course of the year.

Finally, we welcome your efforts to integrate gender and youth perspectives into your work and would like to see those efforts bear more fruit in the coming year. We also applaud your diplomacy efforts to prevent and eliminate statelessness and are pleased your institution is joining ODIHR, UNHCR, and the OSCE Mission to Skopje in organizing the regional conference addressing this issue in October under the auspices of the Chair in Office.

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