



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **Working Session 1: National Minorities and Aggressive Nationalism**

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Robert Bradtke, Head of U.S. Delegation  
OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
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As the institution of the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities enters its third decade, the United States warmly welcomes Astrid Thors of Finland to the OSCE community and wishes her much success leading what is a highly respected and effective institution in the OSCE.

Madame Commissioner, as your predecessors have, you will face many challenges in your new role. Perhaps the least seen but most significant evidence of the HCNM's success is found in conflicts that did not erupt because they were avoided, thanks to the HCNM's efforts. The human rights and fundamental freedoms of all individuals, including members of minorities, must be respected. It remains a challenge to bring all parties to agreement on solutions that respect the human rights of minorities and lead to integration for those individuals who seek to take part in and contribute to the larger society, while at the same time enabling those same individuals and their kin to preserve and promote their identity in terms of language, religion and culture. The United States has every confidence in you and your office, and you have our full support as you carry forward your essential work.

In some states, those belonging to national minorities have seen increased respect for their human rights over the years, and we encourage this progress to continue. Elsewhere, problems remain unaddressed or have gotten worse. For many, the future remains uncertain.

Minorities remain a factor in inter-state relations. Public officials and political parties in some participating States promote activism by national minorities in neighboring states to score political points at home—so-called “kin state activism.” In light of Hungary's expansive nationality law, we encourage Hungarian officials to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric and to use the HCNM's Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations on National Minorities as a guide and resource. In turn, we encourage Hungary's neighbors to respect the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

I urge the Government of Serbia to continue to address the concerns of ethnic Albanians in southern Serbia. The year began with tension and controversy surrounding the removal of a monument in Presevo. Six months later, after the Government of Serbia increased its engagement with local leaders, that tension has subsided, and discussion can focus more on how to make the area more prosperous.

Although Kosovo is not here at the OSCE table, the United States encourages Kosovo authorities to continue their commitment to guaranteeing the rights of all of those living in Kosovo, including Serbs living in the north. The April 19 agreement between Serbia and Kosovo has given residents in northern Kosovo the opportunity to choose political representation, and to actively contribute to making their lives better. For the first time since 1999, all communities in Kosovo have the opportunity to work constructively together to move beyond the ethnic tensions that divide and to create a more stable and prosperous region.

In Macedonia, ethnic tensions, the growing separation of communities, and declining standards of rule of law and media freedom continue to be causes for concern. We encourage all parties in the country to find common ground on these issues based on the spirit of the Ohrid Framework Agreement and EU standards. In particular, we encourage greater integration in education as an investment in the country's future.

We see similar problems in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the counterproductive and inefficient "two schools under one roof" policy. The country remains in violation of the December 2009 European Court of Human Rights ruling on the Sejdic-Finci case, which found that the inability of ethnic minorities to run for certain elected offices violated the European Convention on Human Rights. The government has done little to address the problem. Some officials in Bosnia and Herzegovina seem intent on fomenting ethnic discord. The United States deplores continued efforts by officials in some quarters to deny the genocide that occurred during the 1992-1995 conflict, as well as to prevent peaceful commemorations of all victims of atrocity and those who suffered from human rights abuses.

It is our hope that Bosnia and Herzegovina's upcoming census—the first since 1991—will respect the right of Bosnian citizens to express their identities as they choose. Let me use this opportunity to encourage the High Commissioner and the participating States to more actively examine practices and challenges in conducting a national census. Sharing experiences in this regard could be beneficial to minorities and ensure government resources are directed more efficiently, to everyone's benefit.

In Greece, limits on the freedom of individuals belonging to certain ethnic minority groups to self-identify continue, as does discrimination against and social exclusion of the officially recognized “Muslim minority” in Thrace. Although the individual’s right of self-identification is affirmed legally, those who define themselves as members of an ethnic Macedonian group or other minority affiliation have found it difficult to express their identities freely and maintain their minority cultures.

Minority issues in Bulgaria were evident during that country’s May elections. The legislative ban on campaigning in minority languages is contrary to OSCE norms in the field of elections, as well as the right to use one’s mother tongue.

Turkey’s overall approach to minorities remains restrictive. While reforms related to the Kurdish minority are a step in the right direction, Turkey officially recognizes only three non-Muslim minorities and continues to put limitations on the linguistic, religious, and cultural rights of other ethnic or religious minorities.

Turning to Kyrgyzstan, since the June 2010 violence in Osh the United States has remained deeply concerned about the situation for the Uzbek community in the south and the potential for renewed violence there. This was illustrated on July 17 when ethnic Uzbeks clashed with police in the southern city of Uzgen. There are credible reports of ongoing harassment of ethnic Uzbeks, including police abuse, extortion schemes based on threats of false arrest and imprisonment, and unfair trial proceedings. Nationalism in political rhetoric continues to escalate. The Government of Kyrgyzstan must do more to foster genuine reconciliation and promote participation of persons belonging to minorities in all state structures

In Russia, we are concerned by reports of violence against non-Russian labor migrants, perpetrated by nationalist youth gangs. Multiple so-called “Russian cleansing” raids on open-air markets in July and August by neo-Nazi groups in St. Petersburg raises questions about growing societal intolerance. Police must do more to prevent vigilante action against vulnerable minorities.

There has been no improvement in the treatment of ethnic Georgians in the Russian-occupied Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Property rights of ethnic Georgians continue to be denied by de facto authorities in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. We remained concerned about the accelerated “borderization” taking place along the Administrative Boundary Lines, which is inconsistent with Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity within its

internationally recognized borders, restricts freedom of movement, and harms the livelihoods of those living in conflict-adjacent areas. We repeat our call for a strong OSCE presence to address this issue and supplement the High Commissioner's ongoing work.