



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

address by

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to the

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**[Check against delivery]**

Vienna, Austria – 4 November 2021

Madame Chairperson  
Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a privilege to be here today to present my statement to you. It has been five months since I delivered my first statement to the Permanent Council, and since then I have conducted many visits and engagements. Despite the ongoing restrictions in many OSCE participating States due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I have been able to visit some of your countries, continue my consultations with the Permanent Representatives in Vienna and further pursue my co-operation with other international and non-governmental partners, in accordance with my mandate.

I continue to work closely with my OSCE counterparts, including Secretary General Helga Schmid, ODIHR Director Matteo Meccaci, Representative on Freedom of the Media Teresa Ribeiro and Secretary General of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Roberto Montella. I co-operate with the executive structures and the field missions and presences to address our common challenges in line with our respective mandates. I am also grateful for the excellent relationship I have with the Swedish Chairpersonship, and I commend Chairperson-in-Office Anne Linde for her effective leadership and hard work to strengthen co-operation and partnership between the participating States and in support of the work of my institution.

Since the easing of travel restrictions in a number of OSCE countries, I have been able to visit some participating States in person. I would like to thank the authorities of those States that have hosted me during my visits for the excellent co-operation in facilitating my meetings, including at the highest levels. I value the openness they have shown in discussing matters related to my mandate and take it as a sign of a promising and positive continuation of our collaboration.

I would now like to share my engagements with a number of participating States and regions in alphabetical order. Following that, I will present the thematic work of my institution.

Madame Chairperson  
Ladies and Gentlemen

I continued my contact with the authorities of Belarus and Poland to ensure that any disagreements do not negatively affect inter-ethnic relations.

In mid-July, with the assistance of Estonia's authorities, we organized a study visit to Estonia for a delegation of Ukraine's State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience, a recently established institution mandated to deal with inter-ethnic issues. This forms part of a series of activities conducted in the past year to provide support to and foster contacts among institutions with similar mandates within the OSCE region. I wish to thank Estonia's authorities for warmly welcoming their Ukrainian counterparts, and for sharing insights and lessons from their long-standing experience in integration processes. The visit also provided an opportunity to receive first-hand information on prospective changes to minority education. I am in contact with the authorities of Estonia on those, and will continue providing advice in line with *The Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities*.

I welcome the recent adoption by the Government of Georgia of a new State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration for 2021–2030, following feedback from my institution and other key stakeholders, together with its concrete Action Plan, co-ordinated among several ministries.

In an online meeting with the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, we underlined the need for effective, co-ordinated and adequately resourced implementation to further improve the participation of national minorities in the social, economic, political and public life of the country. This would complement comprehensive efforts to promote the integration of Georgia's diverse society and value a variety of perspectives. I encouraged long-term national education reforms, in which multilingual education is an integrated part. This could include the experience of multilingual education that my office has promoted in schools and preschools with minority languages of instruction, and which are aimed at achieving a balanced approach between increasing proficiency in the State language, as a key tool for integration, while preserving mother tongue education and cultural identity. I also emphasized the importance of socio-economic engagement and participation in decision-making processes, notably for minority youth.

I reiterated my office's readiness to accompany the implementation of the integration strategy via an aligned programme supporting multilingual education, participation and access to media for national minorities, with crosscutting focuses on gender, youth and confidence-building measures. It was submitted to participating States for funding, which I hope will be forthcoming, as strengthening inter-ethnic relations in Georgia also contributes to regional development.

In August, I visited Hungary to address the Annual Conference of the Hungarian Ambassadors. While there, I had the opportunity to discuss the situation of national minorities in Hungary with a range of high-level governmental, parliamentary and national minority representatives, and to exchange views on how matters related to ethnic Hungarians in neighbouring States feature in bilateral relations. Following these consultations, I attest that Hungary has a solid legislative framework for national minorities, which is complemented by efforts to ensure the preservation and promotion of their culture, including through dedicated funding. I welcome Hungary's approach to ensuring the representation of national minorities in the Parliamentary system as well as in self-government at the national, county and local levels. This offers an effective mechanism to ensure the aspirations of various communities are addressed in policy and its implementation.

While in Budapest, I also welcomed the priorities of Hungary as the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on promoting the effective protection of persons belonging to national minorities. In this regard, I appreciated the invitation of the authorities of Hungary to deliver a keynote speech at the concluding conference of the Presidency in October in Strasbourg.

In Kyrgyzstan, my office assisted the national authorities in the development of the Action Plan to the Concept for the Development of Civic Identity for 2021–2026, "Kyrgyz Zharany". I welcome this policy development and I support the intention to re-establish a specialized executive structure dealing with inter-ethnic policymaking.

Within the framework of the Central Asia Education Programme, my office continued promoting mother tongue-based multilingual and multicultural education (MLE) in the region, via initiatives such as online trainings for resource schools in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and webinars for preschool up to pre- and in-service teacher training institutions. The webinars

gathered around 180 participants from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Tajikistan. Those activities helped my office to stay in touch with MLE practitioners and to learn more about their successes, needs, priorities and challenges so we can adjust our support accordingly. This also offers peer support to practitioners who are unable to meet in person due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The external evaluation of the current phase of the Central Asia Education Programme indicated that the education authorities in the Central Asian countries consider my institution's support to be essential and fundamental to their efforts to develop MLE for minority schools. There are still some challenges, including a need to strengthen resources at all levels and better incorporate MLE into national education strategies. I am particularly pleased to report that the longer a school is engaged in MLE, the greater the impact on girls' education. In the next phase of the Programme, the gender impact will be studied more closely to develop strategies that encourage young people, especially girls, to stay in school.

I also organized an online regional event concluding the CAEP programme's third phase on 29 October. This was a useful opportunity to discuss the progress achieved and challenges ahead with relevant stakeholders, including the longer-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education systems, notably in schools with minority languages of instruction. I look forward to expanding regional co-operation and collaboration with all regional partners in the programme's next phase. I encourage participating States to consider funding this important thematic engagement.

In the reporting period, I have continued my dialogue with the authorities of Latvia, as well as with minority representatives in the country. These meetings, which were held online, provided an opportunity to discuss a number of policy reforms in Latvia, including in the field of education, language, media and citizenship.

I appreciated the chance to receive information about the impact of education and language reforms on the ground. Specifically, I noted with interest reports of higher rates of State-language proficiency among minority children, as well as their remarkable learning outcomes in certain subjects. I encouraged the authorities to engage in exchanges with other participating States facing similar situations. I also stressed the importance of preserving opportunities for children to continue studying in their mother tongue and for communities to

continue using their mother tongue in public life. Continuous investment in education, flexibility in implementation of education and language policies, and meaningful consultations with minority communities on policies affecting them constitute some of the advice I shared with the authorities.

Specifically on media, I took note of recent measures affecting media space in minority languages. In this regard, I encouraged the authorities to ensure that opportunities for minority communities to access media in their mother tongue are maintained. In particular, I underlined the importance of providing locally produced media content in minority languages, which I understand is an ongoing effort. This helps to keep minorities within the national informational landscape, and can prevent the emergence of parallel informational spaces. This is all the more important in the context of COVID-19. *The Tallinn Guidelines on National Minorities and the Media in the Digital Age* can serve as a useful reference on the matter, and I am available to offer the expertise of my office to help operationalize such advice in the local context.

In Lithuania, I have held online meetings with the authorities, including the Minister of Justice. I also have been following ongoing legislative developments in the field of inter-ethnic relations. I welcome that these legislative developments are aimed at improving the existing framework for national minority rights, including the development of the new draft Law on National Minorities. I am pleased that the drafting process was participatory and consultative. Adoption of this law will close the legal gap that has existed since the previous law expired in 2010.

At the request of the Speaker of the Seimas of Lithuania, I provided my opinion on the “Spelling of Forenames and Surnames in Documents” draft law, including references to best international practice. I welcome continuing efforts in finding solutions so that persons belonging to national minorities can use and get official recognition for the original spelling of their names.

I have continued the long-term engagement of my predecessors in Moldova on several dimensions of inter-ethnic relations and the integration of society. I had an online meeting with President Sandu and I am pleased to note that the President places social cohesion and the consolidation of society high on her agenda. An active contribution on behalf of national minorities as well as a multi-dimensional approach that embraces various aspects of

integration, from education to employment and from access to justice to mass media, are key in this regard.

My office continues to assist the Government of Moldova with an inclusive and participatory process to advance the National Strategy for Consolidation of Inter-ethnic Relations, in particular with the new Programme and Action Plan to guide activities in this area. As part of this process, we are currently digitalizing the Ethnobarometer, an innovative analytical tool that measures various aspects of inter-ethnic relations in Moldova and on which I reported in my previous statement in June, to make it an important source of empirical data for policymakers in the field of inter-ethnic relations.

I noted the commitment of the authorities to create favourable conditions for national minorities to learn and use the State language to facilitate their socio-economic and political participation. I also appreciate their commitment to safeguard and develop languages spoken and cultures present in Moldova. I stand ready to support this process with expertise, political and legal advice, and support for dialogue. Multilingual education programmes for kindergartens supported by my office have taken root in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia. An interest to pilot similar programmes was expressed in Taraclia.

Following a productive first High-Level Dialogue, which brought together Moldovan parliamentarians, representatives of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and international experts to discuss how effective management of autonomy can contribute to the building of a cohesive, integrated society, my office has been supporting the continuation and deepening of the dialogue between Chisinau and Comrat through engaging with a range of stakeholders, including the Bashkan of Gagauzia.

I will continue to provide support and emphasize the importance of the recently reaccredited Bachelor of Arts study programme of Balkanistics at the University of Pristina. The reaccreditation process is a prime example of successful co-operation between international institutions and local authorities. The Bachelor of Arts programme is set to be a vital avenue for effective participation and language compliance, and will offer a unique opportunity for learning the Serbian and Albanian languages as part of the education system. In this way, the programme would create conditions for bringing communities closer together, and demonstrate

the investment in and focus on supporting knowledge of official languages by policymakers in Pristina.

I visited the Russian Federation, including the Republic of Bashkortostan, to continue the dialogue with the national authorities on the situation regarding inter-ethnic and inter-faith relations, integration and diversity management policies in the Russian Federation and on the status and concerns of Russian-speaking communities in the OSCE participating States. I discussed the state of affairs in inter-ethnic and inter-faith relations of the Russian Federation with the federal government in Moscow and the regional authorities in the Republic of Bashkortostan.

I observed that the inter-ethnic and inter-faith relations in the Russian Federation are managed by a solid institutional framework and are relatively peaceful and stable. Numerous ethnic, linguistic and religious groups seem to be well integrated within Russian society, have a good command of the State language, and have reasonable opportunities to preserve, express and develop their ethnic, linguistic or religious identity and maintain their culture. There are nevertheless differences between regions and between groups, and challenges, related, among others, to internal and external migration and resources available for managing diversity.

I also discussed the state of integration of the diverse society of the Republic of Bashkortostan with the Republic's authorities, education specialists, and representatives of national minority groups and associations. I noted that the Republic's authorities make significant efforts to maintain a balance in the protection and promotion of State and minority languages in education, media and the public space. At the same time, I registered some concerns that due to the 2018 amendments to the Education Law, which made the teaching of the Bashkir language in the Republic voluntary, possibilities for the preservation and development of Bashkir may become restricted. In my follow-up communication to the federal authorities of the Russian Federation, I encouraged them to address the issue of education in and of languages in a pragmatic manner by engaging with national minorities, whose interests are affected, in close dialogue and through co-operation.

In Serbia, I had the opportunity to meet interlocutors in Belgrade, in Novi Sad in the north and in Bujanovac in the south. I found that Serbia has a comprehensive and up-to-date legislative and policy framework governing its diverse society. This includes directly elected National



Minority Councils and dedicated services within line ministries, including the Ministry of Education. I was particularly impressed by the dedication of the new Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue to regularly consult with all national minority groups to find ways of accommodating their interests and function as a tool for national minorities. I commended this inclusive and participatory approach, which is seen favourably by the representatives of national minorities that I met. I witnessed that the provincial autonomy of Vojvodina provides additional opportunities and representation to national minorities residing there, and has, in the meantime, been referred to by my interlocutors in Budapest as a model example of accommodating the interest of ethnic Hungarians. Elsewhere in Serbia, other ethnic groups benefit from Serbia's legislation and institutions for national minorities, while some national minorities, particularly ethnic Albanians in the south, see space for improvement when it comes to their access to media, socio-economic opportunities and employment in public administration. My engagements in Serbia are aimed at supporting the authorities on any matters that may require my attention, as well as disseminating Serbia's positive examples and practices.

In October, I travelled to Serbia again, to chair the annual meeting of the Stakeholders' Committee of the Bujanovac Department of the Subotica Faculty of Economics of the University of Novi Sad. The availability of quality, bilingual higher education in southern Serbia is a good example of multi-stakeholder co-operation towards strengthening social cohesion.

In Turkmenistan, following online consultations with national authorities, my office provided assistance in developing a Road Map for the implementation of the recently signed Memorandum of Co-operation with the Ministry of Education on multilingual education. My office stands ready to support the relevant authorities in their next steps towards the introduction of integrative multilingual education.

Following a series of online meetings with both government officials and minority representatives in the first part of 2021, I had the opportunity to conduct an in-person visit to Ukraine. I also visited the ethnically diverse region of Zakarpattia to acquaint myself with the situation there.

In Kyiv, I had a chance to meet government officials, members of Parliament, as well as representatives of civil society and minority communities. I took note of an increased commitment to and investment in policies and institutional structures in support of social cohesion and integration. Legislative developments as they pertain to my mandate featured in the discussions. Specifically, I welcomed Ukraine's progress on draft legislation regulating national minority affairs, to which my office has been providing technical expertise. I am pleased to note that, in line with the advice of my office and other international partners, consultations with minority communities on the draft law on national minorities have taken place. I have encouraged the authorities to intensify them, also with the assistance of my office, and to continue engaging in a constructive, inclusive and transparent dialogue with minority communities on this draft legislation and all other laws and policies affecting them. This is a crucial step towards building a comprehensive legal framework regulating national minority rights, including in the spheres of language and education, that is, to the largest extent possible, responsive to the wishes and expectations of all minority communities. I also took note of Ukraine's recent adoption of a law regulating matters pertaining to indigenous people. I hope the Law will be an effective tool benefiting both indigenous peoples and society as a whole and will soon be complemented by a comprehensive national minority law. In Kyiv, I also met with representatives of the Crimean Tatars and took note of their concerns, which feature in my dialogue with all relevant interlocutors, as per my mandate.

During my meetings in the cities of Uzhhorod and Berehove, I discussed a wide range of issues related to national minorities with representatives of regional authorities and local communities. I was pleased to see that diversity in the region is viewed as its strength. I was also reassured by the interlocutors' sense of security in the region. There are positive signals of ongoing high-level dialogue between Ukraine and Hungary that have the potential to improve inter-ethnic relations on the ground. In my visit to Ukraine, as well as my visit to Hungary in late August, I encouraged the parties to continue on the path of bilateral dialogue. Specifically, I commended bilateral, technical-level efforts in the field of education, and in particular in relation to the implementation of the education reform, which continues to be a source of concern among minority communities. I hope that this process will lead to tangible compromise solutions. For this, both sides will need to be flexible, invest in resources and reach out to local communities and support their meaningful involvement.

The HCNM Diversity Management Training Tool, a course for civil servants and public officials that my office has been rolling out in Ukraine over the past years, continues to be impactful. The course is now officially part of the curriculum at the Ukrainian School of Governance. We are now exploring possibilities of extending the programme into other public sectors, specifically justice and law enforcement.

I am also pleased to report that a research project to learn more about the intersectionality between gender and national minorities is being piloted in Ukraine. Such research, which aims at filling information gaps in this important thematic area, is meant to later feed into a larger research effort on the same topic covering the OSCE region as a whole.

I conducted a visit to the United States, where I appreciated the opportunity to engage with U.S. Government officials in Washington D.C. on measures taken in the United States aimed at promoting social cohesion, including with the Department of Justice on policing in diverse societies, as well as with members of the Senate and the House of Representatives with leadership roles at the U.S. Helsinki Commission. I appreciate the close co-operation of my institution with the U.S. Helsinki Commission, including on the continued exchange of expertise and knowledge, as well as support on a number of thematic events. I valued the openness of my interlocutors in the U.S. in discussing issues related to diversity and social cohesion in the country as well as the intention to continue the productive exchange and collaboration on matters that fall under my mandate.

In Uzbekistan, my office organized an online roundtable on *The Graz Recommendations on Access to Justice and National Minorities* in collaboration with the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan and the National Human Rights Centre of Uzbekistan. In connection with this event, my office translated and disseminated *The Graz Recommendations* and *The Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies* into the Uzbek language in both Latin and Cyrillic scripts.

I would also like to note that many of the countries mentioned above, especially former Soviet Republics, are celebrating their 30th anniversary of independence this year. I would like to take a moment here to wish them, and in particular my home country Kazakhstan, the very best for the future.

Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentlemen

I would now like to provide an overview of our ongoing thematic and programmatic activities. Since taking up my mandate, I have observed that many States have developed good practices in areas related to managing inter-ethnic relations and supporting the integration of diverse society. I am committed to facilitating the sharing of good practices and experiences in this field between participating States, thereby contributing to a greater understanding of ways to address the challenges of managing diversity in society. These best practices also form the foundation of the thematic HCNM Recommendations and Guidelines.

In June, 25 years after the publication of the 1996 *The Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities*, I organized an online anniversary conference to promote the key principles and practices in applying the Hague Recommendations across the OSCE region. The event offered the opportunity to exchange relevant policy practices among participating States and to identify needs and opportunities regarding my institution's thematic work on education in the future. The conference brought together close to 300 participants, including high-level representatives of education authorities in OSCE participating States, representatives of the OSCE and other international organizations, and experts working in the field of multilingual and multicultural education. I am very grateful to our Chairperson-in-Office Ann Linde, who participated in the official opening of the event.

I am honoured that tomorrow I will welcome you and your representatives to the 15th Anniversary Conference of *The Policing Recommendations in Multi-Ethnic Societies*. These Recommendations provide advice to policymakers on how to recruit, train and develop police services that are more representative of the society they serve. They also provide guidance on how to enhance communication and trust between the police and national minority communities, thereby strengthening inter-ethnic relations, as well as increasing the operational effectiveness of the police. Apart from looking into the main principles embedded in these Recommendations, and which remain as relevant as they were 15 years ago, this conference will provide an opportunity to look into emerging challenges and new perspectives. We will exchange good practices and learn from shared experiences on ways to mainstream gender in policing in diverse societies. The event also provides a platform to hear specialist reflections on the Recommendations and emerging practices in light of evolving trends. As part of our

common effort towards ensuring social cohesion in diverse societies, I am very much looking forward to the opportunity ahead of us, and to welcome all participants both in person here at the Hofburg and online.

On 12 November in Geneva, in co-operation with the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, Ms. Tatiana Valovaya; United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Michelle Bachelet and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, Mr. Fernand de Varennes, I am co-organizing an event on the “Effective participation of national minorities in economic life as a strategy for conflict prevention”. International experts will provide concrete solutions for more inclusive recovery policies in the aftermath of the pandemic that take into consideration the social and economic vulnerabilities of national minorities, caused or aggravated by COVID-19, including from a gender perspective. Overall, the socio-economic inclusion and participation of national minorities will remain high on my agenda also for 2022.

My office’s plans to conduct research into the intersectionality of gender and national minorities, jointly with the Senior Gender Adviser and her team, are now being realized. In the coming weeks, my office will be organizing an expert meeting on the topic here in the Hofburg, involving a number of external experts to further define the direction of the research and to reflect on preliminary findings on challenges faced by minority women, coming from the pilot study in Ukraine. There will be an opportunity for delegations to meet the team informally and discuss our work.

Looking ahead towards 2022, my office will celebrate the tenth anniversary of *The Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies*. I hope that we can get together to share best practices, identify challenges and review lessons learned.

It is my pleasure to continue my predecessors’ work organizing the Max van der Stoel Award, named in honour of the first High Commissioner on National Minorities: the distinguished Dutch Statesman Max van der Stoel. Last year, the Jury of the 2020 Max van der Stoel Award unanimously decided to pay tribute to the Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre in Ireland in recognition of its activism and commitment to advocate for Roma and Traveller communities. An in-person ceremony to honour the winner will take place on 19 November at the Peace Palace in The Hague. You are all cordially invited to attend and I look forward to greeting you

in The Hague if your schedules permit. I am grateful that the Secretary General and Director of ODIHR have agreed to join me at this event, as we work together to implement commitments to improve the situation of Roma and Sinti throughout the OSCE region.

As part of my outreach efforts to the next generation, I delivered a lecture to students from Leiden University on the importance of multilateralism and international relations. It is important to engage with young people, who will carry the legacy of this organization and many other international entities forward in the future.

Madame Chairperson  
Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to underline that my institution's dynamic programmatic activities could not have happened at their current scale without the generous support from various participating States. I continue to value these contributions very highly, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the authorities of Austria, Finland, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Ukraine and the United States for their generous support.

Madame Chairperson,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

While my position was designed to serve as an instrument for conflict prevention within the OSCE's politico-military dimension, the human dimension is embedded within the DNA of my work, as security and respect for minority rights are tightly interlinked. This is where my institution is closely co-operating with the Council of Europe both at the leadership level, as well as along technical consultations. Two weeks ago, I met with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe Ms. Marija Pejčinović Burić to discuss matters of mutual interest related to national minorities as well as several areas of complementarity across our respective institutions. We agreed to continue our productive co-operation. I also visited the Council of Europe to exchange views with the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, and I participated in the conference "National minority identities in diverse societies: European perspectives", organized by the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of Europe,

Indeed, the importance of co-operating with multilateral institutions on matters that fall within my mandate cannot be overestimated. The United Nations is also a key partner for my institution, which is why I visited New York at the end of October to hold a series of consultations with the UN leadership on ways to advance and strengthen our co-operation on national minority-related matters. As the UN Secretary General António Guterres recently said at the Security Council open debate, “Diversity is not a threat, but a source of strength. It is an anchor of peace and stability.” Indeed, *integration with respect for diversity* has been a principle underpinning the conflict-prevention work of my institution for many years. In this regard, I value a number of practical avenues for co-operation on strengthening social cohesion and harnessing the benefits of diversity, which I have discussed with my UN counterparts, including with Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina J. Mohammed; Under Secretary-General of the Counter-Terrorism Office, Mr. Vladimir Voronkov; Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS, Ms. Mirjana Spoljaric Egger; Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Mr. Oscar Fernández-Taranco; Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights, Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris; and High Representative for the UN Alliance of Civilizations, Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos. While in New York, I also co-hosted — together with Dr. Fernand de Vareennes, the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, and the Permanent Mission of Austria to the UN — an event on the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Economic Participation of Minorities.

I continued my co-operation with the UNHCR, including on statelessness. Earlier this week, I co-hosted the fourth OSCE-UNHCR Seminar on Sharing Good Practices on Statelessness among OSCE participating States, in partnership with the UNHCR and ODIHR in an online event opened by the Swedish Chairpersonship. With this in mind, I would like to once again encourage all States to consider what they can do to support efforts towards ending statelessness by 2024, as outlined in the Global Action Plan. Where relevant, and within my mandate, I will continue following up with individual recommendations regarding statelessness in my discussions with participating States through the quiet diplomacy approach.

I continued to enhance our relationship with the European Union and the European Commission, which remain fundamental strategic and operational partners in my endeavours, including in preventing tensions and conflict related to inter-ethnic relations from the Western Balkans to Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. In the Western Balkans, EU

aspirations and the accession process create positive momentum and conducive conditions for the improvement of national minority-related legislation and policies in candidate countries. My institution remains available to assist relevant capitals in the Western Balkans through expertise on how to enhance national minority-related legislation in line with OSCE standards that would help them meet the requirements of EU accession.

Madame Chairperson,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I look forward to continuing to work closely with you. As I implement my mandate and seek to increase trust within and between participating States on issues related to inter-ethnic relations in the spirit of co-operative security, I look forward to relying on your support. In this regard, I would like to thank the incoming Polish Chairpersonship for hosting me in early October to discuss our co-operation.

Since this is my last statement to the Permanent Council under the Swedish Chairpersonship, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our Chairperson, Ambassador Ulrike Funered, for her support and co-operation and the Swedish Delegation for their committed work throughout 2021.