



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT BY NORWAY IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORT BY THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER ON NATIONAL MINORITIES KNUT VOLLEBÆK**

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 22 November 2012

Thank you, **Mr. Chairman**,

I join others in warmly welcoming High Commissioner Vollebæk to the Permanent Council and I thank him for his comprehensive presentation.

Mr. Chairman,

I took part in the recent launching of the High Commissioner's Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies. I was impressed by the expert's comments on them as well as by the well-structured and logic guidelines, based on solid work on the principles for integration. It struck me how simple it can be to define measures that can help preventing frictions that otherwise easily can escalate into severe security challenges for any government. Now we need to make use of these Guidelines. This Council has a responsibility to assist the High Commissioner in promoting these, as well as previously launched HCNM guidelines.

Mr. Chairman,

The report of the High Commissioner fully demonstrates his untiring efforts to promote good treatment of national minorities as well as good interstate relations on issues concerning national minorities, wherever they are. In particular I welcome his comments on the cycle of inter-ethnic violence, as in the case of Skopje, as well as conflict prevention and State responsibilities towards its citizens. These are comments which truly illustrate why the High Commissioner's mandate is in the 1st dimension, but they also underline the

cross-dimensionality of almost every single issue concerning our common security.

I note with interest that two pages of the report are devoted to the High Commissioner's visit to Georgia. The conflict there is a particular reason for concern. Due to the untimely closure of the field mission, we rarely have access to information on the situation in the breakaway regions. The High Commissioner's visit to Abkhazia provides us with useful information, while lack of access to South-Ossetia remains a problem. This – as well as the mentioning in the report of planned eradication of Georgian villages – truly proves the need for a new field mission to Georgia with a robust mandate.

I have also noted the comments in the report on the High Commissioner's visit to Ukraine that shows that our upcoming OSCE chairmanship faces unsolved challenges. We support the High Commissioner's initiative to organize in Kyiv an International Forum on Crimean Tatars and other Formerly Deported Peoples.

We expect that the upcoming chairmanship stands ready to cooperate with the institutions also on matters of concern in their own country.

Mr. Chairman,

We need the expertise and advice we can get from our institutions, also when not asked for. We must therefore preserve the autonomy and the integrity of our institutions. They, together with our field missions, give the OSCE operational capacity. We hope that the importance of the institutions will be reflected in the ongoing budget negotiations for 2013.

One further reason for increased support for the Institutions, on a more general basis, is the worrying reports on increasing nationalism as well as intolerance towards minorities. We are also concerned that the current economic crisis in a number of OSCE participating States may further fuel this intolerance. Nationalism – and kin-state activism – may easily cause frictions which again may lead to security challenges and instability. I urge the High Commissioner to continue fulfilling his important role in early warning.

Mr. Chairman,

I thank the High Commissioner for inviting us to attend the celebration of the 20th anniversary of his Office in the Hague in March next year. I look forward to participate.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my best wishes to the High Commissioner on National Minorities and his dedicated and competent staff in the further pursuit of the institution's important mandate.

Thank you.