



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

**STATEMENT**

by  
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to the  
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I thought it might be useful if, in reporting to the PC today on my recent activities and concerns, I laid some stress on my work in the field of education, which has been highlighted by the Bulgarian Chairmanship as an area of priority. Education occupies a large and indeed increasing proportion of my time and I would like to offer my support to the Chairmanship in developing a concept of the OSCE's role in the educational field.

My mandate requires me to be an instrument of conflict prevention "at the earliest stage". But the earliest stage for many of the root causes of conflict is the educational stage, during which, for good or ill, young people develop the attitudes which predispose them to the peaceful resolution of conflicts on the one hand or the use of violence on the other.

If the OSCE wants to develop its full potential for conflict prevention, we should indeed see what more we could do in the field of education. This conclusion is reinforced by the serious problems affecting the quality of education in some participating States. I will return to this point after reporting on my activities.

Before starting my presentation on my work in individual countries I just wish to welcome the decision made by the European Union, also based on my recommendations, to include in its new Constitution Article 2 ( "The Union's values") the rights of persons belonging to minorities. I believe that this is an important step.

In **Moldova**, education has long been at the very core of my activities. Also my recent visit to Moldova, which took place last week, focussed on educational issues. One of them was the Moldovan schools in Transdnistria using Latin script. I will come back to this later in the afternoon.

But also another of the topics discussed in Moldova relates to education. As the Permanent Council may recall, in 2000 I initiated, together with the OSCE Mission to Moldova, a project for training teachers of the Moldovan language (which some in Moldova refer to as Romanian language). The project, which has proven to be highly successful, was designed to improve the teaching methods of teachers who teach Moldovan as a second language will be finalized this year. It has then included the publication of two textbooks and the training of over 1200 teachers. I believe that learning the State language is one of the keys to social integration and as my assessment after the visit is that, particularly in urban areas and in the

South of Moldova, a considerable part of the minority population still lacks a sufficient command of Moldovan I now consider a continuation of project activities of my office in the area of teaching the State language in Moldova.

In **Georgia** I continue to pay special attention to Samtskhe-Javakheti, with the implementation of a **Conflict Prevention and Integration Programme**, focusing mainly on education and media issues. Examples of concrete projects are **the teaching of the State Language to Civil servants** and **helping high-school graduates**, whose mother tongue is Armenian and who have difficulties pursuing university careers in Georgian universities, to improve their language proficiency in Georgian.

I am also happy to announce here for the first time that, following discussions with the Georgian Government and the United Nations, I have decided to become involved in certain aspects of the situation in Abkhazia. Also here, education is an important tool. During the visit to Sukhumi last year, I expressed my concern about the plight of schools in the Gali district which are encountering difficulties in the provision of education in Georgian. I called upon the de facto leadership of Abkhazia to show flexibility regarding the issue of "teaching in the mother-tongue" and to ensure its resolution in full accordance with international norms. In order to assist the de facto authorities in doing so, this month I will start the implementation of a project aimed at **providing Methodological Support and Training for teachers of the Georgian and Abkhaz languages in three districts of Abkhazia, including Gali.**

On educational issues in **Latvia**, I continue to pay particular attention to the further preparation of the new school year in Latvia when, according to the Education Law, secondary schools teaching in minority languages will increase the number of hours taught in the State language. I informed the PC in detail during my last presentation, on 30 March, about my policy on this minority education reform. I will monitor the start of the implementation of the reform on 1 September closely.

I have just returned from a visit to **Kyrgyzstan** where I attended the launch of the Report and Recommendations of the Working Group on Integration through Education. The Working Group was established by H. E. President Akaev following a recommendation of the HCNM and has been supported in the course of its work by my office. The Working Group was

composed of officials, representatives of NGOs and of national minorities. In the course of its work, the Working Group travelled to various parts of Kyrgyzstan to collect information and views from a wide variety of interlocutors.

The Report produced by the Group outlines the ways in which education can promote social integration and provides concrete recommendations about how this can be achieved. Priorities include the development of bilingual/multilingual schools, the design of multicultural curricula and teaching materials (textbooks) and the training of teachers in modern teaching methods. I believe that Kyrgyzstan is to be congratulated for taking a leading role in this area. I intend to support the implementation of the key recommendations of the Report. I also believe that other international organisations could assist with investment in integrated education and I look forward to future co-operation with such organisations in this area.

Staying in Central Asia, **Turkmenistan** has, in recent years, embarked upon an ambitious and far reaching programme of nation building. This programme contains a number of elements that have an effect on the relations between the different ethnic communities of the country. The areas of my particular focus are the questions of educational reform and the strengthening of the State language, as well as proposals for population resettlement. Aspects of the government's policies in these areas are, in my view, creating some difficulties. This affects all national minorities within the country. Reflecting the focus within the HCNM mandate on issues of security, including regional security, I am following closely the situation of the Russian speaking and the Uzbek speaking communities of the country.

As I have already reported to this meeting, in November 2003, that I had the opportunity to undertake my second visit to Turkmenistan. This was an important visit as it allowed me to extend my dialogue with the authorities in Ashgabad. A particularly notable aspect of the visit was the meetings that I had in the Dashoguz region of the country. I believe that it is essential that my dialogue be deepened with further visits to Turkmenistan. The authorities of Turkmenistan have made a commitment to receive the High Commissioner. I understand that timetabling difficulties in Turkmenistan have required the postponement of my planned visits over the Spring and the Summer of this year. I welcome the invitation of Turkmenistan for a visit in September of this year as further concrete progress in our dialogue is essential to my ability to fulfil the responsibilities identified in the mandate of the HCNM

A number of countries in Central Asia are also facing the challenge of building States and developing inclusive national communities. These are key issues that lie at the heart of aims to create modern, prosperous and stable societies in the region. The appropriate educational policies can promote social integration, thereby assisting these aims, and, at the same time, provide individuals, from majorities and from minorities, with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in the public life of their country.

As I already pointed out during my last presentation to PC, March riots in Kosovo have helped to realise that the situation in the Balkans requires continuous attention and commitment of the international community. I would like, however, to underline that there are also positive developments in the south-eastern Europe. **Croatia** has just recently been granted the status of official EU candidate and set the date for the start of negotiations at the beginning of 2005. I welcome the EU decision and intend to continue to follow up on a number of issues concerning minority rights and return of refugees, which I identified during my visit earlier this year and that also have been mentioned in the conclusions of the European Council.

The application of the **F.Y. Republic of Macedonia** for EU membership and the entering into force of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement were other steps towards improved political stability in the region. I visited the country on 26-28 May when I focused on a number of inter-ethnic issues in the context of implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, in particular education and the use of languages and symbols. Facing the loss of its President in a tragic plane crash and the early elections, in addition to the worst eruption of violence in Kosovo since 1999, Macedonia acted with maturity which reinforces my confidence that the country has improved its level of stability and security. No direct spill-over effects of Kosovo conflict have been registered. The EU integration, together with the implementation of the Framework Agreement, already acts as a major landmark in the process of reforms.

While in Macedonia, I attended the Board Meeting of the SEE University, which *inter alia* discussed the Strategic Plan for the University 2004 - 2008. The SEE University, with almost 4000 students and likely 5500 next academic year (20% being non-Albanians) has already made an important contribution to improving access for Albanians to higher education,

increasing the overall percentage of Albanians in student population from 5% to approx. 12%. It has been widely credited for its academic standards but also as a model for inter-ethnic integration and co-operation.

In the meantime, the Macedonian Parliament adopted the law on the establishment of the new third state University in Tetovo. On the invitation of the Minister of Education, I decided to participate in the preparatory work for the commencement of operation of this institution in order to support its future relations and complementarity with the SEE University.

I have also recently advised the Macedonian authorities about the draft law on the use of flags of communities in Macedonia, a field in which my office has acquired a substantial expertise in recent years. It is essential that the regulation of the use of flags is designed to minimize the risk of contributing to inter-ethnic tensions and I urged authorities to find a proper balance as far the use of flags of communities, in particular in the public sphere, is concerned, while treating the use of flags by private persons as a matter of freedom of expression.

I visited **Serbia and Montenegro** (both Belgrade and Podgorica) on 20 - 22 April. There is no doubt that the country is at a crucial point in its development. It requires very strong political leadership and the firm commitment regarding its European future. I hope that the election of the new president of Serbia - Boris Tadic will be an important development in this regard. As far as the protection of national minorities is concerned some progress has been achieved, in particular in the implementation of the Law on National Minorities, which my Office has been and will assist authorities.

On educational issues, I will focus my attention on assessment of the amendments to the Serbian Law on the Foundation of the Educational System and their impact on the educational rights of persons belonging to national minorities. In my letter to the Serbian Minister of Education I have drawn attention to the fact that some of the amendments, which were adopted by the Serbian Parliament on 28 May, might be problematic.

After my discussion in Belgrade on developments in Kosovo and its impact on the situation in the region, I followed up with a visit to **South Serbia** on 25-26 May. It was the first visit ever by the High Commissioner to this region, which covers the three municipalities of Preshevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja. On the security situation, I was concerned about

possible negative implications of developments in Kosovo. Despite many remaining problems, progress has been made over the last three years thanks to the involvement of the international community including the OSCE. As regards the education of persons belonging to the Albanian national minority, together with representatives of the Serbian Ministry of Education and of the local Albanian community, I am contributing to the work of a commission for the development of history curricula in the Albanian language schools in the region. South Serbia will remain one of my focuses in Serbia and Montenegro, apart from the situation in Sandzak and Vojvodina.

On my future calendar, I also wish to inform you that I am planning a visit to Ukraine, including to the Crimean peninsula, directly after the summer recess. I would like to engage with the Ukrainian authorities by offering my assistance for their efforts to further the integration process of national minorities, amongst them the Crimean Tatars, in the social and economic life of the peninsula.

I would like to conclude with going back to the issue of education by making some observations and suggestions in support of the Chairmanship's aim of developing a concept of the OSCE's role in education.

The activities in the field of education which I have described are broadly aimed at the civil and social integration of persons from all the ethnic communities within a State, both from the majority and from national minorities, with a view to avoiding frictions which might lead to tensions and even conflict. In exchange for respect by the State for the rights of the Minority to maintain their culture, language and religion and for opportunities for them to participate fully in political and economic life, the State can expect their loyalty and responsibility. Education can contribute to integration in a number of ways: by promoting understanding of other cultures and of the value of diversity in a multi-cultural society, as well as tolerance and respect for human rights; by developing the skills, particularly the linguistic skills, which successful participation in a multi-cultural society requires; and by promoting contacts between different groups.

Promoting understanding of other cultures involves developing a broad curriculum in subjects like history, literature and geography which fairly reflects the cultures of all groups. A first step to developing this kind of curriculum may be to bring together teachers from

different groups to devise a balanced curriculum in these areas. Tolerance and appreciation of all other cultures can also be promoted by civics courses and training in human rights. Such steps can only be achieved with substantial support for the teaching profession, including in service training in contemporary teaching methods. Another key requirement is for up to date textbooks which incorporate the new syllabuses.

Language teaching is a particularly complex and sensitive area in many States. I encourage States to develop a language policy which equips minorities to participate in the public life of the State, while at the same time preserving their mother tongue.

The promotion of contacts and the avoidance of wholly segregated education for different groups is a crucial means to promote understanding and avoid prejudice and stereotypes. Bilingual/multilingual education including schooling in the mother tongue, is probably the most effective way to generate such contacts. But they can also be encouraged in other ways, for example through joint participation in extra curricular activities such as cultural and sporting events.

Promoting inclusion and participation is, in my experience, one of the best means to foster harmonious social relations and the measures I have outlined can help to lay the foundations for full participation of all citizens in the public life of the State. In order to ensure that such measures are properly targeted, it is essential to include persons from all ethnic communities in the process of making and implementing educational policy. This includes both educational officials and specialists and teachers and parents

My educational activities are focused on inter-ethnic questions. But education is also an important tool for dealing with other root causes of conflict. International research has shown that inadequate standards of education can lead to deprivation and social exclusion, which fuel radicalisation and the resort to violence. Raising the standard of education can reduce these risks. Getting the priorities for investment in education right is also important. For example an overemphasis on new buildings and technology at the expense of teacher training or an unequal allocation of resources between communities or regions risks diluting the impact of reform or even creating new tensions. Cooperation between States for example over the mutual recognition of qualifications can facilitate educational exchanges which promote understanding and breakdown barriers.



As an organisation devoted to conflict prevention the OSCE cannot stand by while education standards in some States decline, opening the field to politically motivated alternatives. We should, in my view, do more to tackle these risks "at the earliest possible stage." I welcome the ambition of a number of participating States to undertake a modernization of education within their countries and believe that the OSCE should support them both directly and by acting as a stimulus for assistance by other organisations. I am convinced that the OSCE can make a major contribution in this vital area. I hope that the experience that my office has acquired in these matters can help the Chair in mapping out the way ahead.