



**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan**  
***1102<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Permanent Council,***  
***2 June 2016***

*in response to HCNM Mrs. Astrid Thors*

Mr. Chairperson,

The Delegation of Azerbaijan would like to join previous speakers and warmly welcome Mrs. Astrid Thors to the Permanent Council. We thank you Madame High Commissioner for your comprehensive report.

At the outset we would like to reiterate that Azerbaijan values the work and extends its support to the HCNM. This institution while operating strictly in line with its mandate can contribute to implementation of the OSCE commitments across all three dimensions and facilitate cooperation on sensitive issues among participating States.

OSCE, as a regional security organization with its comprehensive understanding of security, has long ago recognized the necessity to address the issues relating to national minorities and elaborated set of commitments to protect and promote their rights. The activities of the High Commissioner are of vital importance in this regard.

Risk of violent conflict within a multiethnic society can be avoided or reduced if States concerned pursue smart integration policies, and ethnic-kin States respect the sovereignty of neighboring countries, refraining from unilateral steps that undermine territorial integrity of States. Along with that, universality of human rights and fundamental freedoms regardless of ethnicity, religion, sex or language must be provided. Exercise of a right by a national minority cannot be realized at the expense of discrimination of the rights of majority. In this context, we recall the Istanbul Summit Document, in which the OSCE participating States stressed that full respect for the rights of persons belonging to national minorities may not undermine, but strengthen territorial integrity and sovereignty of participating States.

Mme. High Commissioner,

We share your concerns over a marked increase of manifestations of intolerance and hate speech, also by mainstream politicians, especially upon the backdrop of the current migration crisis in Europe. In this context, we recall that in accordance with the relevant OSCE decisions all participating States are responsible for promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, and for taking effective measures with regard to combating manifestations of intolerance. Addressing the issues of hate speech and hate crime is ever more acute in the context of conflict prevention and post conflict rehabilitation, especially with a view to prevent tensions between communities. Such approach along with smart integration policies can contribute immensely to the process of reintegration of communities.

Education and media are essential tools to eliminate marginalization of minorities. Effective strategies built on access of minorities to education process as well as to information technologies and media could significantly promote stability and understanding in diverse societies.

In conclusion, we wish you, Madame High Commissioner and your Office, every success in your future endeavors.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson,