



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

address by

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to the

Warsaw Human Dimension Conference 2025

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Warsaw, Poland – 13 October 2025

Excellencies,

Esteemed colleagues,

Distinguished participants,

It is an honour to open this session on Tolerance, Non-Discrimination today, as part of the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference. As we reflect on the implementation of our OSCE human dimension commitments with regard to the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, including those from Roma and Sinti communities, we are reminded that the protection and inclusion of these groups were not merely an addendum to the Helsinki Process, but fundamental elements of its vision of comprehensive security.

In my remarks during an opening session last week, I spoke about courage. Courage to act and prevent today's divisions from becoming tomorrow's conflicts. Finland's Chairpersonship theme, "Resilient Together," resonates deeply with my mandate, which describes the position of a High Commissioner on National Minorities as an instrument of early warning and early action. In practical terms, this means I help States manage diversity in ways that promote inclusion, prevent conflict and uphold our shared commitments. True resilience – the kind that enables societies to withstand crises and emerge stronger – requires the full participation and integration of all communities, including national minorities.

Today's security landscape presents great challenges to societies across the OSCE area. In times of rising nationalism and divisive rhetoric, political leaders must refrain from instrumentalizing national minority issues for short-term political gain, whether that entails targeting minorities within their own borders or exploiting fragile situations in neighbouring States.

The Copenhagen Document of 1990 built upon the foundation of the Helsinki Process with groundbreaking commitments that remain the cornerstone of minority rights protection in the OSCE area. The document's core assertion was clear: minority issues "can only be satisfactorily resolved in a democratic political framework based on the rule of law."

Critically, the Copenhagen Document declared that respect for minority rights, as part of universally recognized human rights, is “essential” for peace, justice, stability and democracy. That word choice was deliberate: *essential*, meaning *foundational and indispensable*.

Three decades of experience have validated this principle. Where participating States have implemented Copenhagen’s commitments seriously, societies have become more resilient.

The OSCE’s human dimension commitments are deeply rooted in the comprehensive security framework, which aligns with my institution’s approach to conflict prevention. Over three decades, we have developed ten sets of thematic Recommendations and Guidelines. These are practical tools that translate OSCE commitments into actionable guidance on education, language rights, public participation, policing, inter-State relations, socio-economic inclusion and more.

These publications demonstrate a fundamental truth: we can address today’s challenges by building the strength of our diverse societies.

Women from minority communities face multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination. They are often marginalized both as women and as members of minorities. Yet they are often the first to see tensions emerging and the last to be consulted on solutions. My office is developing targeted recommendations to enhance minority women’s meaningful participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes, ensuring their voices are not just heard, but they have opportunities to actively shape the outcomes.

Similarly, engaging minority youth is essential – young people from minority communities can be agents of positive change, but only if they have genuine opportunities to participate in social, economic and political life.

The Finnish Chairpersonship’s recognition of civil society’s vital role reflects my experience that sustainable solutions to minority issues require genuine partnership with civil society organizations. These organizations often serve as early warning systems for emerging tensions and as bridges between communities and governments – a role that becomes even more critical in challenging political environments.

Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,

Fifty years of Helsinki. Here's what half a century has taught us: diversity is not a problem to manage; it is a resource to harness. Look at where innovation happens, where economies grow, where communities weather crises. It is in societies that embrace their full diversity, not despite it, but because of it.

“Respect the Principles, Respond Today, Prepare for the Future” – the Chairpersonship's priorities are our roadmap. “Respect” implies having every community at the table. “Response” means action, not rhetoric. “Preparation” entails investing in minorities' potential.

Thank you, and I look forward to our productive discussions during today's session.