



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

www.osce.org/hcnm

PRESS RELEASE

Developing situation in Crimea alarming, says OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

KYIV, 6 March 2014 – OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Astrid Thors is alarmed about the situation in Crimea.

On her return to Kyiv today, she said: “I am alarmed about the risk of violent conflict on the Crimean peninsula and the effects this could have on all communities, particularly the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar groups.”

Thors said the situation remains precarious. “Rash decisions on the future status of Crimea are a major source of tension and expose divisions between the peninsula’s communities that have been left unaddressed for decades.

Like the Ukrainian community, Crimean Tatars have taken a different position to the majority population, which increases their vulnerability. Relations between ethnic groups on the peninsula are characterized by a growing climate of fear,” she said.

“I remind the authorities in effective control of the Crimean peninsula that they are obliged to ensure security and respect for human rights, including minority rights, for all those present on the territory, regardless of whether they are of Russian, Ukrainian or Crimean Tatar or other origin.”

“There is a real risk of bloodshed. All decisions on essential issues, such as the status of Crimea, language policy or national minority policy, must be taken in dialogue with all parties and be consistent with international law,” said Thors. During her visit to Kyiv and Crimea, the High Commissioner found no evidence of violations or threats to the rights of Russian speakers.

For PDF attachments or links to sources of further information, please visit:
<http://www.osce.org/hcnm/116180>