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Remarks by H.E, Ambassador Radojko Bogojević,

Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia to the Republic of Poland

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Working session 10: Tolerance and non-discrimination I

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Thank you Mr. Chairperson.

For many years, Serbia has been supporting and cooperating with all OSCE institutions, including the Office of High Commissioner on National Minorities. We believe that all OSCE executive structures, and in particular institutions, should give their utmost and fully utilize their own capacities and mandates, thus contributing to fostering peace and stability in the OSCE region.

HCNM represents one of the most sophisticated mechanisms from the OSCE toolbox for enhancing and consolidating security within the OSCE region, especially with respect to its early warning actions. Its constructive engagement, particularly quiet diplomacy aimed at striking a careful balance between policies of integration and inclusion and those of recognition and accommodation of diversity, has been a significant input in achieving high level of standards in the field of protection of national minorities' rights throughout the OSCE region.

Recommendations and guidelines issued in recent years by the Office of High Commissioner on National Minorities could be considered as valuable tool for the

implementation of existing norms and standards, as well as a real added value of the OSCE.

The Republic of Serbia has benefited from engagement of former High Commissioners on National Minorities, especially in the context of interethnic relations in South of Serbia, and in particular in regard to the Department of the Subotica Faculty of Economics in Bujanovac. Let me use this opportunity to reiterate our thanks to the former High Commissioners Mr. Volebeek and Madam Thors for their committed engagement in this field.

Today, we have been implementing high international standards in protection of individual and collective rights of twenty national minority communities throughout Serbia. Being aware that continuous engagement is needed to promote and safeguard the rights of national minorities, our authorities have been undertaking a number of measures. However, we don't consider our work done. We are constantly making steps in advancing our institutional and legal framework for protection of rights of national minorities, as well as its implementation.

In the framework of European integrations, Serbia continues to make positive developments. In line with the obligations stipulated in the Action Plan for Chapter 23 justice and fundamental rights and the Action Plan for the realization of the rights of national minorities numerous activities have been carried out. Most recently, the Government has adopted the Action Plan for Exercising the Rights of National Minorities based on a number of International Instruments and recommendations. In the field of education some progress has already been achieved, as well. Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development with the representatives of national minority communities in Serbia, has started

recently with the official translation of the textbooks for the elementary schools, to the 8 national minorities' languages, that have been missing so far.

Mr. Chariperson,

The right of minorities to freely use their own language and script is of a great importance as a precondition for enjoyment of other rights. In that regard, we believe that all of us sitting around this table should be ready to implement all our OSCE commitments in a good faith.

As we already pointed out, we welcome that in the framework of her regional tour, the former HCNM Madam Thors has visited Croatia recently. This is particularly important taking into account problems regarding national minorities, including Serbian, their language and script rights. We hope that the Office of High Commissioner on National Minorities will continue to engage closely with Croatian institutions and representatives of national minorities to foster social cohesion and inclusive policies.

In the Declaration on advancing relations and resolving outstanding issues between the two countries that was signed by Serbian Prime Minister Mr. Aleksandar Vučić and the President of Croatia Mrs. Kolinda Grabar- Kitarović in June this year, the improvement of bilateral protection of national minorities was set as one of priorities for both sides.

It is obvious that the promotion of national minority rights is beneficial for stability and prosperity of the whole region. As it was stated on numerous occasions by the Prime Minister Vučić, Serbia remains committed to enhancing good neighboring relations, strengthening regional cooperation and stability, including cooperation in European integration process.

With regard to Kosovo and Metohija our primary concern remains the improvement of the overall situation on the ground and alleviation of the increasing difficult conditions which non-Albanian communities and other vulnerable groups in Kosovo and Metohija face daily.

As far as the proposal for the representatives of Priština to be present here is concerned, our position has already been expressed many times, including last week at the HDIM. It remains unchanged, it is well known, and we cannot agree with such proposals.

Thank you Mr. Chairman