

Intervention in the Working Session 11.

Albania shares the view that all forms of manifestations of racism and xenophobia are incompatible with the respect for human dignity and human rights. As a member of the HRC Albania is rendering its contribution to protect and respect human rights all-over the World.

We are witnessing an unprecedented rise in religious intolerance, violent extremism, widespread discrimination, persecution of individuals belonging to religious, ethnic, or other minorities. They are sometimes present in the neighborly relations, distorting these relations. Religious and cultural diversity are under serious threat in many parts of the world. In this context, Albania would like to emphasize the importance of the principles of universality and non-discrimination, pointing out that human rights are universal and all human beings equal.

At present we are facing also with the refugee issues, which bring with themselves also the practice of diversity. The refugee issue is an international one now and it must be dealt internationally. It must be dealt with solidarity and collective responsibility, respecting human rights, but working together to strengthen security, as well, through efficient border management and enforcing the fight against organized crime, trafficking of human beings and terrorism.

Intolerance, discrimination, violent extremists may capitalize on shortcomings and gaps in education and capitalize on local grievances. Appropriate education, through family, schooling, society, political behavior, media included, should influence to inculcate pluralism, citizenship, and even local culture. Education that is inclusive of gender, ethnic, and religious perspectives can be an effective to counter intolerance and violent extremist narratives.

States must do their utmost to ensure social inclusion of all categories and strata of population, especially, young generation, through a strong legislative frame, education and training, tailored prevention activities and, where appropriate, through de-radicalization to violence and violent extremism programs. Curricula and textbook reforms may be necessary in our school systems in order to offer more inclusive

narratives or dispense with discriminatory or biased language, cultural or religious misrepresentations. States can work with local partners to publicly counter hate speech and discrimination, as well as to teach the next generation the values of human rights, global citizenship, democracy, and most importantly, respect for others and tolerance for difference.

Vulnerable young people, lacking proper knowledge, those with a fundamental misunderstanding or misinterpretation of religious fact fall prey of professional recruiters who through distorted religious narratives, spread misunderstandings and misconceptions of others. Ignorance can be easily and will surely be exploited and there is a clear chain of impacts: hatred leads to discrimination, which in turn can lead to radicalization, to extremism, violence and finally, unfortunately, to terrorism.

Besides a strong legal framework at home, law enforcement institutions which are dealing with these issues, we are implementing in the Albanian education system the project "School as a Community Centre – a friendly school for all". It encourages partnerships between schools, families and the community, considering that schools are not simply education providers, but also catalysts of community cohesion and development.

The Government of Albania has decided to include in the Albanian school system specific curricula to provide youth with the proper knowledge on tolerance, anti-discrimination and the culture of religions into a secular schooling system.

We have designed and will begin to implement during this school year a specific education project as part of large package of other measures. The project is designed to respond to a particular environment that we have in Albania: our tradition of tolerance. It should help preserve and strengthen the precious institution of respect, understanding and broad-mindedness among religions, reinforce and further nurturing a society where people respect each other as equals, regardless of faith and cultural background.