

MINISTRY FOR EUROPE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, 10-21 September 2018**

Working session 16: Combating racism, xenophobia, intolerance and discrimination

Thank you Madam Moderator,

I would like to use the right of the reply to the so-called “Movement for the Renaissance of Northern Epirus” because in their statement today and during two weeks of HDIM, they have presented disinformation and deformation of the Greek minority reality in Albania.

The reality of the Greek minority in Albania and other national minorities in my country is quite different. The so-called “Movement for the Renaissance of Northern Epirus” because they do not operate in Albania are not aware of the developments in the respect of the right of minorities.

Albania has positive records and keeps committed to fulfil the international obligations for the respect and protection of human rights and minorities. Albania has ratified several conventions on human rights, as well the Framework Convention of Council of Europe “for the Protection of National Minorities”. A climate of respect and tolerance prevails, generally, in Albania, and inter-ethnic relations remain good due to respect and protection of the rights of the national minorities. This has been noticed by the reports of the international organisations as OSCE, CoE, EU etc.

The Constitution of the Republic of Albania, and the domestic legal framework guarantee the rights of persons belonging to national minorities (including the Greek minority), the right to declare their ethnicity, to maintain and develop their national identity, culture, religion and fundamental rights and freedoms, the right to education in the mother tongue.

The Albanian government is committed to respecting the rights of the Greek minority in Albania, in accordance with all relevant international standards. We consider the Greek minority not only a genuine bridge for our longstanding friendship, but also a precious asset of our country’s fundament and values.

While inter-ethnic relations continued to be good, Albania significantly improved the legal and policy framework for the protection of minorities by adopting in October 2017 the Law on minorities. This law and the secondary legislation on its implementation to be adopted soon by the Albanian Government aim at ensuring the exercising of specific human rights of persons belonging to a national minorities (including those pertaining to the road signs mentioned during this session by the so-called “Movement for the Renaissance of Northern Epirus”), which are necessary to protect the distinct identity of national minorities as an essential component of an integrated society and which guarantee nondiscrimination and full equality before the law. Greek minority associations in Albania were part of the consultations on the new law on national minorities and are rendering their contribution in this respect

We reject any direct or indirect statements or allegations referring to the so-called “Greater Albania”. Such statements are in our view wholly inadmissible. The ghost of “Greater Albania” haunts only those who keep it alive. In fact, it is a concept created by those who do not share our European values and who have to gain from fear mongering practices. Such statements are in our view wholly unacceptable and untrue and therefore inadmissible. They are also to the detriment of good neighborly relations and undermine the stability of the region. There exists neither a platform as such, nor any Albanian state-supported political or any other action aimed at furthering policies towards associations that promote a “Greater Albania”.

Thank You.

Sent from my iPad