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THE ALBANIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting****Warsaw, 10-21 September 2018**

Working session 15: Tolerance and non-discrimination II (continued),

- including ensuring the equal opportunity for women and men in all spheres of life;

- the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality;

- prevention of violence against women -----

Dear Madam Moderator,

Fully subscribing to the EU statement presented, I would like to make a statement in my national capacity to provide some highlights of our national efforts in our engagement and achievements in the area of gender equality.

The achievement of gender equality is among the key priority objectives of the Albanian Government. In cooperation and with the support of civil society and international organizations, especially with UN organizations in the framework of "One UN" Program 2012-2016, a series of initiatives and legal improvements have been undertaken; specific policies and programs have been implemented; the respective support structures have been strengthened and the capacities of the human resources engaged and dealing with these issues have been built and enhanced.

Albania's new Parliament that emanated from the June 25, 2017 elections, has the highest number of women deputies in the last 27 years. A total of 41 deputies out of total number of 140 parliament deputies or 29.3% were women, compared to the 2013 elections when the respective percentage stood at 23.5%. In the government there were 6 ministers out of cabinet comprised of 14 ministers, or 46.1% including a deputy prime minister. The representation of women in the local government Municipal Councils there were 34.6% of local assembly

deputies (as compared with 12% in the 2011 local elections). 9 women (14.7%) were elected as mayors from the overall total of 61 mayors.

There has been progress in the representation of high-level women in Public Administration, where 45% of women are posted at the level of Director-General. There is a steady improvement also in the number of women involved in the police sector, where in 2017 the respective figure stood at 14.2%, as compared to 2014 when it stood at 10.4%. Also during this year, women account for 17.5% of the staff in our armed forces, compared to 2015 when it was 17.2%, while the proportion of women owners / administrators is 26.8%.

With the organization of the new Government, the area of responsibility for gender equality issues and the fight against domestic violence is assigned to the Ministry of Health and Social Protection. Gender equality issues are the responsibility of the Sector for Social Inclusion and Gender Equality, which is within the framework of the Department of Health and Social Protection Development Policy, under the General Directorate of Policies and the Development of Health and Social Protection. Gender mainstreaming is achieved through coordination and empowerment of the respective structures at the central and local levels. Gender employees at local level are the links between local level and ministry for both gender equality and domestic violence issues. So far, 11 ministries have appointed gender-issue related employees.

At the local level, in 58 municipalities there are gender-issue related employees (out of 61 municipalities in total), who in most cases play the role of local coordinator for managing domestic violence cases. These local gender-issue related employees are mainly employees at the Directorate of Social Services of the respective municipalities.

National Council on Gender Equality: Reformed by Prime Minister's Decree No. 239 dated 13.12.2017 as an advisory body for the management, definition and development of state policies on gender equality, as well as for co-ordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention. The meeting of this Council was held in March, where some reports were approved such as: Monitoring Report for the Gender Equality Strategy for 2017; Report on the Situation of Domestic Violence and Report on Recommendations given by the Istanbul Experts Monitoring Team (GREVIO).

The Decree no. 32, dated 12 February 2018 of the Prime Minister appointed Deputy Prime Minister as National Coordinator for Gender Equality, authorized to strengthen the national mechanism for gender equality at central level and to undertake a coordinating role.

I-Legal improvement and positive measures for women.

Within the framework of harmonization of Albanian legislation with the CEDAW Convention and the Istanbul Convention, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection has taken the legal initiative for amending the Law No.9669, dated 18.12.2006 "On Measures against Domestic Violence", as amended. At November 2017, a round table was organized for this purpose. Theme : "The presentation of the amendments to the Law No. 9669, dated

18.12.2006, "On Measures against Domestic Violence ", as amended. The round table brought together the relevant Members of Parliament of Albania, representatives from ministries and other central institutions , representatives of international organizations and representatives of civil society.

During May-July 2018, these issues were discussed and debated in the three main parliamentary commissions related to the draft-law. Civil society were very active during these sessions and contributed in improving the draft-law. Law No. 47/2018 "On Amendments to Law No.9669 / 2006" On Measures Against Violence in Family Relations ", as amended, was adopted at the 23.07.2018 plenary session.

This law and sub-legal acts aim to have the following effects:

- Preventing and reducing domestic violence cases, especially providing for greater protection for children.
- Increasing efficiency and cooperation of authorized and responsible structures in working to support the Victims of Domestic Violence.
- Increased participation of perpetrators in specific rehabilitation services with a particular focus on alcoholic abusers, drug addicts, or mental health ones, clearly disclosed in court decisions for issuing protection orders.
- Increased free judicial support for victims of domestic violence.

Adoption of the Law no. 121/2016 "On Social Services in the Republic of Albania" aims to establish standards for social services, integrated services, specialized services and social reintegration alternatives to employment, vocational education and training. General and specialized support services for survivors of violence and discrimination against women and girls are also specifically addressed.

There have been others legal improvements such as: in the Criminal Code regarding the prediction of domestic violence as a criminal offense (2012 and 2013); improvements in the Labor Code on maternity protection (2015), in the Social Insurance Law regarding the post natal leave for fathers (2014)

With DCM No.733 of 20.10.2016, the "National Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2020" was adopted . The strategy has four main strategic goals:

- Strategic Goal 1: Economic empowerment of women and men;
- Strategic Goal 2: Guaranteeing factual and equal participation of women in the politics and public decision-making;
- Strategic Goal 3: Reduction of gender-based violence and domestic violence;
- Strategic Goal 4: Empowerment of the coordination and monitoring role of the National Gender Equality Mechanism, as well as awareness-raising of the society on gender equality advancing.

With the implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2016-2020, the Government of Albania has made important progress in establishing relevant institutional and policy frameworks aimed at enhancing, advancing and achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in line with international, regional, national gender equality standards and obligations such as Goal 5 aimed at: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls"; then The Action Plan "On Supporting Entrepreneurial Women" for the period 2014-2020, aiming to create an empowering environment that encourages more women to start and develop their businesses.

The plan proposes a series of measures that promote entrepreneurial women and create an appropriate environment through which adequate support is available with financial resources, the implementation of which would have a positive impact on business:

- Promoting women to explore self-employment opportunities by means of information exchange sessions in urban and rural areas carried out in cooperation with NGOs;
- Identifying and assessing the needs for women entrepreneurs;
- Conducting Studies for the Appropriate Financial Instruments for Women and Provide Information on Financing Women's Entrepreneurship;
- The Ministry of Finance and Economy in cooperation with UNWOMEN has prepared a project to support women entrepreneurs "Women entrepreneurship", proposed to be funded under the IPA.

The Government of Albania has made considerable efforts to tackle the difficulties of women's participation in the labor market. The Government of Albania Programme focuses on increasing the women employment and improving the quality of the workforce in line with the EU vision and directives, the Europe 2020 Strategy, and EU accession criteria. In particular, the National Employment and Skills Strategy program for 2014-2020 aims to identify and outline appropriate and gender-sensitive policies for the promotion of employment and vocational training of the workforce, better jobs and opportunities for life-long training, and better access for jobseekers to vocational training and employment.

Thank you for your attention!