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RELEASE OF DOCUMENT

Letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania to the CSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

Upon the decision of the 27th Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials taken on 13 June 1994, the above mentioned letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, dated 30 May 1994 (CSCE Communication 25/1994) has been released to the public.

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Ministerul Afacerilor Externe al Romaniei
CABINETUL MINISTRULUI

Bucharest, May 30, 1994

Dear Mr. Van der Stoel, [handwriting]

I am happy to be now in a position to answer your letter of September last. If I didn't do it earlier, it was mainly because I wanted to give you some more substantial answers to issues which only time, determination and political commitment can solve in a favourable manner.

(1) First of all, I would like to inform you that on May 17, 1994, the President of Romania, Mr. Ion Iliescu, promulgated the law on the ratification of the **European Convention on Human Rights** and its additional Protocols. According to Article 3 of this law, Romania recognizes the right to individual petition to the European Commission on Human Rights and the compulsory jurisdiction of the European Court on Human Rights.

The ratification of this Convention and of its additional protocols only 7 months after the admission of Romania to the Council of Europe, and despite the busy programme of the Parliament. Is, I believe, a clear sign of Romania's determination to observe the obligations deriving from this most important document.

The process of ratifying the General Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the Council of Europe and its additional protocols is well under way in the Romanian Parliament. Preparations are being made with a view to signing the European Charter for Local Self-Government and the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Cooperation between Territorial Communities of Authorities.

(2) The entire group of eight prisoners of Hungarian origin, pardoned by President Iliescu in March of this year, has been freed. The last two detainees (Mr. Boldiszar Ferencz and Mr. Ilyes Istvan), who were still executing the non-pardoned part of their punishment, were conditionally released on May 6, 1994, as a result of the

decision taken by the Court of Appeal in Alba-Iulla.

H.E. Mr. Max Van der Stoel
CSCE High Commissioner on national Minorities
The Hague

(3) During the relatively short time which has elapsed since the founding of the **Council for National Minorities - C.N.M.** (April, 1993). It has taken concrete steps in its endeavours to improve the exercise of rights by persons belonging to national minorities in Romania, under the constitutional and legal provisions in force and in compliance with relevant international standards.

With a view to promoting actions designed to encourage the preservation, development and expression of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of minorities, the Council has fairly and effectively run the funds allotted to the activities of ethnic organizations, including the purchase and equipping of offices, the organization of specific cultural and scientific events (festivals, symposia, meetings), the financing of publications edited in minority languages and of radio and television broadcasts for the national minorities. In what concerns the latter issue, an important role has been assumed by the Minority Advisory Committee to the Audiovisual Council.

Considering the need for better training in the field of specific issues related to national minorities, the C.N.M. has launched a postgraduate programme. In cooperation with the Romanian Ministry of Education and the European Center for Interethnic Relations, aimed at training experts in the field of ethnic affairs, which is attended by representatives of minorities and of state institutions.

The Council for National Minorities has attached a particular attention to the **draft law on national minorities**. Several drafts have been discussed in the Council. The draft presented by the Democratic Forum of Germans in Romania seemed to enjoy the widest support. The Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (U.D.M.R.), in turn, presented its own draft, insisting on this proposal. The Council prepared a draft of its own, which tried to take into consideration the different views expressed throughout the debates on the topic. This draft was submitted for further analysis and suggestions to the ministries and other departments, as well as to some international organizations for legal expertise. The amended text was discussed at the weekly Government meeting, on May 27, 1994, and will go on to the Parliament in the near future. Furthermore, while these discussions were going on, the representatives of national minorities, at the initiative of Mr. Varujan Vosganian, leader of the Union of Armenians in Romania and president of the Parliamentary Group of National Minorities in the Chamber of Deputies, submitted their own draft to the Parliament.

Therefore, at the moment, there are several draft laws on national minorities before the Romanian Parliament, where they will soon be open for debate.

(4) **The draft law on education** has been analyzed by the specialized parliamentary Commission, amendments have been proposed and the debates on this important law started this week in the Chamber of Deputies.

As for the remarks made in the Memorandum submitted by Mr. Jonsson and Mr.

Konig on the honouring of the commitments entered into by Romania upon its accession to the Council of Europe, regarding the intention of the Romanian authorities "to abolish medical training, vocational training and the teaching of history and geography in the Hungarian language". It would be more accurate to point out that medical and vocational training, due to its very specificity, has always been made in the official language - Romanian, in what concerns the question of teaching history and geography in minority languages, it is included under Chapter 13 of the draft law. It is therefore not a question of restricting the education for minorities which, on the contrary, is continuously expanding and which meets the principles laid down in Recommendation 1201 (1993) of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly. In any case, I believe that it is still premature to comment on the draft law of education, since it will undoubtedly be amended in the process of its passing through the two chambers of Parliament.

(5) The draft law on the Advocate of the People: Three draft laws (two drawn up by groups of Romanian parliamentarians and a third submitted by the Romanian Institute for Human Rights) are expected to be discussed in the Legal Commissions of Parliament in early autumn of this year, after summer vacation.

(6) The Government of Romania is deeply committed to improve the process of social, economic and cultural integration of the Roma/Gipsy population, mostly by assisting them in the fields of education and job training. Thus, in 1993 it initiated several job training programmes for Gypsies and began experimental primary school classes in the Roma language, using handbooks edited in this language. Next year, the first promotion of schoolmasters specialized in Roma tongue teaching will graduate from a three-year course. It is also worth mentioning, for example, that in Romania, one of the few countries where the Gipsy language has acquired a written form, a Roma/Gipsy dictionary was published in 1993.

The Council for National Minorities has been constantly concerned with encouraging the preservation and development of the Roma cultural identity, by sponsoring Gipsy cultural and artistic events. Likewise, under the auspices of the Council a national meeting of the Roma leaders will be organized in September 1994.

(7) Efforts are being made to combat violence and ethnic hostility and hatred, including anti-Semitism, against persons belonging to national minorities. In this sense, amongst other measures, a National Committee for Coordinating Actions against Racism, anti-Semitism and Xenophobia was recently set up.

Greatly appreciating the positive role and support given by the CSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities to the new European democracies in building stable, democratic societies, based on the rule of law and the observance of fundamental human rights and liberties. I am looking forward to welcoming you again to Romania. Please accept, your Excellency, the expression of my highest consideration.

yours [handwriting]

Sincerely

Teodor Melescanu,

[signature]

Minister of State

Minister of Foreign Affairs