

Statement made on behalf of the Delegation of Croatia

Tolerance and Non-Discrimination WS 14

Warsaw, 11 October 2006

Promotion and respect for minority rights is one of the issues to which Croatia attaches particular attention, not only because this is one of the political prerequisites in the EU negotiating process: respect for ethnic, cultural, linguistic and other differences and assistance in their preservation, are the best safeguards for a stable and secure society, both at the national and the regional level.

In that respect Croatia developed a normative framework for the protection of national minorities. This fact has been recognized by different international bodies, including the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe.

By virtue of the Constitutional Law on National Minorities, the rights of 22 national minorities in Croatia range from general prohibition of discrimination and the rights for the preservation of language, national and cultural identity on the one hand to the recognition and guarantee of the rights of participation in public and political life on the other hand. This the highest international standards were applied. In addition to that several bilateral agreements on mutual protection of national minorities were concluded. As for political rights of NM, it's worth mentioning that minority representatives in the Parliament are part of the governing coalition since three years.

In order to implement these standards, we are focusing now on the creation of a climate in society conducive to full enjoyment of their rights.

With that aim, amendments to the Criminal Code were introduced with regard to definition of hate crime. These Amendments entered into force as of the first of October 2006. By virtue of the Amendments hate crime is now every ordinary criminal offence in Criminal Code which was motivated by hatred towards someone on the account of his race, religion, language, political or other opinion, property, birth, education, social position or other status, gender, color, sexual orientation, nationality or ethnic origin. In addition, the State Attorney Office issued instructions on monitoring of such criminal offences on the keeping of a separate record of the cases where hate appears to be the main

motive for the offence. It is worth mentioning that the Judicial Academy in Zagreb will be involved in the process of education of judges.

At the end, allow me to inform of a Program which was conducted in Croatia in June this year and was jointly organized by OSCE/ODIHR and the Croatian Ministry of Interior. This Program started as a pilot project and now is well underway in Croatia. The aim of the Program is to improve capacity of police officers to identify and respond to hate crimes and related incidents improving their ability to investigate and detect hate crimes. A formal Memorandum will be signed during the forthcoming Tolerance Implementation Meeting in Dubrovnik taking place in two week's time.