

STATEMENT BY THE BULGARIAN DELEGATION - WORKING SESSION 12

I exercise my right to reply with respect to the statement made by the Muslim Denomination in Bulgaria.

Bulgaria is pursuing a consistent policy aimed at preventing and eliminating any forms of discrimination and promoting mutual understanding and tolerance among persons belonging to different ethnic, religious or linguistic groups.

The Constitution of the Bulgaria prohibits racial discrimination, intolerance and xenophobia in the most categorical manner. This constitutional principle has been embodied in all branches of the domestic legislation and Bulgaria has a comprehensive and solid legal framework in this regard. My country is also a party to the core UN and CoE human rights instruments, which are part of our domestic legal order.

At this stage we are not in a position to comment on pending proposals at the National Assembly.

However, we would like to point out that as a State Party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights the Republic of Bulgaria has an obligation to ensure to everyone the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, irrespective of his or her religion, citizenship, race, color etc. This right includes “the freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching”.

Even though the freedom of religion is a pillar of every democratic society, it is not an absolute right and is subject to limitations, exhaustively stipulated in art. 9 para 2 of the European Convention for Human Rights, as well as in art.37 para 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria.

In conclusion and taking into account the negative trends around the world, the Bulgarian government makes consistent efforts aiming at forming positive attitudes towards citizens belonging to any ethnic group, and of addressing any prejudices in this regard.