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I REPUBLIKËS SË SHQIPËRISË
PRANË ORGANIZATAVE
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PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
TO THE INTERNATIONAL
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SESSION III**

**Statement by Ms. Albana Dautllari
Delegation of Albania**

Mr. Chairman,

In today's world, our societies are moving towards globalization and integration by attempting the founding of a huge family, in which there is room for all the assets and values of the nations and peoples. The small countries are not expected to compete in the global world with their economies and material assets. However, they can contribute in enriching the global society with their most precious identity and values by creating a rich mosaic of values and cultures that recognize, respect and develop one another.

Let me come right to the point and share some experiences using descriptions and analysis made by foreigners - the "Albania Case". It began to be treated as the "Albania Phenomenon", as an exemplary case of religions coexistence throughout the long historical path of the Albanian nation. The "Albania Case", or the "Albania Phenomenon", became important not only as a cultural and historical issue, but above all, as a useful experience for the humanity, as an evoking and encouraging opportunity in international circles.

While scholars were discussing whether the future would come with clashes or dialogue among civilizations, intolerance brought too many tragic events, including related to terrorism, which forced humanity to reflect deeply over its past and future.

Exactly at this point in time, two international conferences were held in Tirana, under the auspices of the President of the Republic, and the Director General of UNESCO. It brought together an important number of heads of state, as well as politicians, academics, scholars, students, etc. A series of other activities on the same array of issues have taken place since and are planned for the future, too.

Let me share with you what inter-religious tolerance means among the Albanians. The Albanians are a relatively small people. They have not had many opportunities to enjoy and promote the values of their historic and cultural

identity because they have been divided in several parts in the Balkans countries, with no more than half of the Albanian nation living within the borders of the Albanian state.

In Albania, it has not been the tradition to officially register on religious bases. Religious pertinence is not included in the generalities required for the population's registration. The reports among the religious communities that are mentioned in the studies made mainly by foreigners refer to hypothetical numbers arrived at by using the only state demographic registration conducted in 1929-30, which contained also the "religion" indicator. One group of the Albanian population practices Christianity and, within it, two branches: the Western Roman Christianity and the Eastern Orthodox Christianity. The other group practices Islam and, within it, two Muslim branches: Islam and the Bektashian branch which represents the reforming and liberal Protestantism within Islam.

The religious tolerance that has always existed among the Albanians is not a quality developed in modern times. Neither was it formed through education and schooling. It is a tradition that originates from the depth of the centuries and has existed throughout the recorded history of the Albanians. Worth noting is a significant fact that there has never been any religious strife among the Albanians. All have accepted and respected the reality in the country, with all its values.

What is more important is that the national feeling rests above the religious distinction in the identity of the Albanians. An Albanian is first and foremost a member of an ethnic community and then of a religious community. One of the famous ideologists of the Albanian National Renaissance has stated laconically: "The religion of the Albanian is being Albanian - Albanianism." This demonstrates that the Albanians have given priority to nationality over religion.

The Albanian state is secular and, according to the constitution of the country, the Albanian state is separated from and does not have one official religion. This does not exclude the responsibility of the state to enable the conditions for the revival and development of religion and ecclesiastical institutions.

Thank you