

**Milena Klajner, MA, Head of the Office for national minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia**

Madam chair person, honorable delegates,

First of all we would like to congratulate you for organizing this meeting with very important agenda: education of national minorities.

All national minorities in Croatia have the right to quality access to education pursuant to the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities and the Law on Education in Languages and Scripts of National Minorities. According to the Antidiscrimination Act which has been adopted by the Croatian Parliament this year, it is forbidden any form of discrimination and segregation of members of national minorities. National minorities have the right to education in their own language and script at all levels of education, from pre-school to higher education which is financed from the state budget.

Participation of national minorities in the decision making process is a key issue; first of all it is crucial to have participation of minorities in the decisions which affect them, but also participation in mainstream policy. In Croatia there are 8 guaranteed seats for national minorities in the Croatian Parliament. Minorities also have the right to representation in representative bodies in local and regional self-government units. With the aim of promotion, preservation and protection of status of national minorities in the society, the members of national minorities are electing also councils and representatives of national minorities in the units of self government.

Regarding proposed text of Recommendations we would like to suggest in Section V in the sentence dedicated to human rights education to include also inter cultural education which is very important for all pupils and students in order to prevent any sort of prejudices against minorities and to promote intercultural dialogue.