

HRC, Forum on Minorities issues

Statement of the Republic of Macedonia

(Mr. Dusko Uzunovski, Minister Counsellor)

Madam Chairperson,

Since that I am taking floor for the first time, allow me on behalf of my Delegation to congratulate you for the election as Chairperson of the first Forum on Minority Issues.

I would also like to commend the work of the IE on the Minorities issues Madam Gay McDougall for the selection of the theme for the First Forum and for her work during the preparation process.

Republic of Macedonia belongs to the group of more than 70 countries that cosponsored the Resolution 6/15 of the HRC. We do consider that the education generally and the access to education of the Minorities is essential for their complete integration in the overall system of the respective state.

Madam Chairperson,

To describe arrangements for ensuring the equal opportunities and equal access to education of Minorities in one state in 3 to 5 minutes is rather difficult task, but I will try to provide you with at least essential information on some of the aspects in the concept note for the First Forum.

(As mentioned by you Madam Chairperson) The equal access to education in the Republic of Macedonia is regulated by the Constitution and by the Laws on Elementary, Secondary and Higher Education and the legal framework guarantees the right to education to everybody under equal conditions, with special emphasis on the elementary and secondary education, which are compulsory and free of charge. Discrimination based on sex, race, national, ethnic or social origin or religious affiliation, wealth or social status, is prohibited.

(Mr. Thornberry: language) For members of the ethnic communities in the Republic of Macedonia, the educational process is conducted in the language and alphabet of the ethnic communities. The textbooks are also written in the language of their instruction. The instructions in the overall system for education in the Republic of Macedonia are held in four teaching languages: Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and Serbian. According to the curriculum for elementary school education, other languages of the communities such as Vlach and Roma are being taught as optional languages.

Madam Chairperson,

(Control of Implementation and monitoring processes) Special bodies for the advancement of education of persons belonging to the ethnic communities have been established. Namely, a Directorate for Development and Advancement of Education in the Communities' Languages was formed within the Ministry of Education that provides a particular emphasis to the prevention of discrimination in the area of education.

One of the main problems in the Republic of Macedonia is a dropout rate of the students in the Secondary education, mainly amongst the students who belong to Roma and Albanian Community.

(Assistance, support and involvement of the International organizations) The ongoing UNESCO project "Education for All" (also supported by the UNICEF office) has the goal to increase the quality of education for all students in the Republic of Macedonia regardless of their ethnic, religious and cultural background. The activities are targeted to provide necessary skills to undertake concrete measures for reduction of school withdrawal rate of these students.

(Field wo Expert teams through education of parents aim towards raising the awareness of the importance of their children education. In addition, a strategy on how to prevent this phenomenon in future was developed.

Madam Chairperson,

(One of the experts mentioned access to tertiary education) The Law on Higher Education in the Republic of Macedonia includes the measure of "positive discrimination". This measure enables, in addition to regular students, members of the non-majority communities to be enrolled in the first year of studies, by establishing the so-called additional quota, which is a legal obligation. Two amongst four established state universities are located in city where majority of population is Albanian. The instructions at most of the Universities are provided in Macedonian, Albanian and English language, in some of the Faculties on Turkish language as well.

Madam Chairperson,

Another problem that exists is a lack of adequate teaching staff on mother tongue of ethnic communities. In order to cope with this problem, Republic of Macedonia made enormous efforts to overcome this situation in the area of education. Especially, positive developments have been witnessed after the implementation of the Framework Agreement and the adoption of the Amendments of the Constitution in 2002.

In the state pedagogical institutions of higher education and at the State University's Faculty of Philology a possibility is given the instruction to be held in the languages of the members of non majority communities, for education of elementary school teachers. Same possibility exists in the Didactics and Methodology of Teaching subjects for secondary school teachers and studies on Albanian and Turkish language have been organized. It is the state's obligation to finance this type of instruction.

In order to promote the rights of Minorities, particularly for the purpose of expressing, nourishing and developing the own identity, at the Faculty of Drama Arts the instruction is held in the languages of the members of the communities.

A legal provision is encompassed, according to which the financing by the state will be provided for the higher education studies of this kind.

Madam

Chairperson,

(Efficient Implementation of international standards) In concluding, I would like

to mention that several other ongoing projects exist to provide and to promote an equal access to education of non-majorities communities in the Republic of Macedonia. Established criteria of the educational programs for the members of the communities in the Republic of Macedonia are aimed for the implementation of the principles set out in the Fundamental Human Rights documents such as: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, International

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination; the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

Thank you.

Annex

In high schools attended by Roma children, another project has been implemented by the **Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia entitled "Scholarship and Mentoring Program for Roma Students in High Schools"**. The objectives of this mentoring system is to offer and provide assistance and support to each student in order to be able to overcome the problems and impediments encountered during his/her schooling and education, to achieve better grades, to improve behavior marks, to reduce absence from school, to raise personal awareness about the necessity of education, to increase the capacity for self-education, to continue the education at higher university level, to ensure socialization and acquisition of working habits, etc.

The AESSEK project "Building Bridges" is targeted at achieving a greater social cohesion amongst young people.

Furthermore, the objective of the European Movement Project is to increase the knowledge of high school students about institutions, functions and role of the European Union and other European organizations and institutions.

The OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje has been implementing another project the pupils are exposed to and learning about children's rights, and the necessity to respect these rights.

In the framework of the project implemented by the Council of Europe, many multicultural clubs have been created in a large number of schools throughout the country, with the principal aim to increase the awareness of students about the need for intercultural understanding and tolerance.

The number of students enrolled at Universities is constantly increasing, and including the academic year 2003/2004. After the opening of the State University in Tetovo, which have had a total of 2,350 students in the two accredited academic years during 2004/2005, the total number of Albanian students amounts to more than 15.5% of the entire student population in all universities in the country.

To encourage the use of languages of other communities, the Ministry of Education issued a decision ensuring Vlach language and literature to be studied at the Pedagogy Faculty in Stip. It is also planned to implement a special project to study Roma language and literature as an optional subject matter at one of the departments within the Philological Faculty.