

**Forum on Minority Issues 2020**  
**19 - 20 November 2020**

**Intervention by Romania**  
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Madame Chair,

Romania aligns itself with the EU statement.

Hate speech threatens individual rights and human dignity, disturbs peaceful coexistence and rational public debate. Combating hate speech is part of the fight against racism and other forms of discrimination, including towards persons belonging to minorities.

Several multilateral treaties impose obligations on states to respect and to ensure rights, prohibit discriminatory speech and criminalize certain forms of hate speech. These obligations should be followed both online and offline, within the framework of existing national strategies and action plans on preventing racism, xenophobia, radicalisation and violent extremism.

The main challenge when adopting measures aimed at combating online hate speech is how to avoid unwanted limitations to other rights, especially the freedom of expression. The current COVID-19 pandemic has shown that there is a thin line between Governmental action aimed at protecting a fundamental right and the limitations of fundamental freedoms.

The 2018 UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech and other relevant initiatives explore legislative patterns and judicial practices and policies. We note the recommendations from the October 2019 report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression on the need to regulate online “hate speech”, while meeting the conditions of legality, legitimacy, necessity and proportionality.

Romania highly values the cooperation with human rights international mechanisms, including Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures, with the purpose to identify and combat hate speech. In light of this, we cannot but disagree with the statement made by a representative of a Romanian NGO this morning, who referred to the statement of Romanian authorities against one specific minority, in the context of the COVID-19 crises. While contesting the validity of this statement, we would like to emphasize that Romanian authorities are fully committed to combat hate speech and promote anti-discrimination legislation.

The existing legal framework sanctions acts of hate crime or serious hate speech, including in social media, through criminal means. One of our main objectives remains to ensure the legislative and institutional coherence, consisting in the implication of relevant authorities in the full implementation of the existing legislation.

I thank you.