

13th session of the Forum on minority issues

Statement by H.E. Vesna Batistić Kos, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Croatia to the UN

„Hate Speech, Social Media and Minorities“
International legal and institutional framework
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Madam Chair,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

In today's world, hate speech spreads fast and takes its roots in forms of prejudice in different societies, which in the end leads to misconceptions, misunderstandings and ultimately to intolerance and possibly even violence.

I assure you of my country's support for all relevant international mechanisms that are in place to prevent hate speech against members of national minorities.

Croatia pays close attention to hate speech. We will look carefully into the UPR recommendations we have received on that matter just last week.

It is important for any society that wishes to nurture a climate of tolerance and peaceful coexistence to harmonize its domestic legislation with the article 20 of the ICCPR, namely with *the prohibition of any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence*.

In Croatia, a Criminal Code definition of hate crime has been amended. Now it includes *language* as an additional discriminatory motive, which further strengthens the protection of national minorities.

We are also working on a new Law on Electronic Media, which will strengthen editor's responsibility for journalistic texts but also for readers' comments. The aim is to be able to quickly react to hate speech and other forms of intolerance in electronic media, including against national minorities.

Madam Chair,

We hope that the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, issued in June this year, will help countries further strengthen the right to freedom of expression while fighting the incitement to hatred towards national minorities.

In this sense, we welcome recently adopted Guidance for its implementation, while stressing the importance of the Rabat Plan of Action as well.

I have one question for panelists; Where does, in your view, the freedom of expression stop when addressing hate speech against national minorities, especially online?

Thank you.