



MISIONI I PËRHERSHËM
I REPUBLIKËS SË SHQIPËRISË
GJENEVË

PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
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**Intervention of the Republic of Albania
20 November 2020**

Madame Chair,

Albania is committed to protecting and promoting all human rights in accordance with international obligations. Diversity is an integral part and a source of enrichment in our society. At the national level, Albania has considerably improved the legal and political framework for the protection of minorities by adopting in October 2017 a specific law on minorities, based on international standards and followed by a comprehensive consultation process with relevant actors including minorities and civil society.

We welcome the Forum whose topic this year is an analysis of practices, challenges, opportunities and initiatives to combat hate speech against minorities in social media. You have rightly pointed out that the world is facing a worrying surge in xenophobia, racism and intolerance, including a rise in anti-Semitism, on the basis of ethnicity and religion. Observing the phenomenon will not be enough, we need action.

From our perspective, there is a need to react, including by drafting binding legislation, even if the task seems delicate, because we must guarantee respect for the right to freedom of opinion and expression. Hate speech often creates a climate of intolerance and hostility and can contribute to the exclusion of minorities, combating such speech could prevent a rise in extremist ideologies, which exploit and use social media and other forms of communication as platforms for sectarianism, the history of which has shown us that the consequences can be serious.

In Albania, traditionally there is no problem of real understanding between the different groups of the Albanian population. Unusually for the region, hate speech - at least in its most serious form - was once rare. However, incidents of hate speech in the media can have a negative impact on public discourse in general.

The Criminal Code of Albania stipulates as a criminal offense “incitement to hatred or to conflicts for reasons of race, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation...”. The recent amendments to the law “for the protection against discrimination”, adopted in October 2020, include several provisions relating to forms of discrimination and more particularly to “hate speech”. “The Alliance Against Hate”, constitutes a common approach in the fight against hate speech and the promotion of diversity in Albania.

We must rely on the key role of the media to provide important information to the public and fight hate speech, fake news, while supporting fact-checking initiatives.

In addition, Albania is cooperating with all countries in the region for the protection of the rights of minorities, as we believe that this is an essential factor in advancing reconciliation in terms of stability and good neighborhood relations in South-Eastern Europe and beyond. In this context we welcome progress in **North Macedonia and Montenegro**, including the adoption of the law on the use of languages in Macedonia, or an improvement in the protection of the rights of national minorities in Montenegro. We encourage the authorities of these two countries to continue their efforts to improve the protection of minority rights. Recognizing the progress made, we encourage the Serbian government to promote and respect the rights of the Albanian population in the Presheva Valley and to implement the 7 point package, agreed years ago between the representatives of the Albanian community of southern Serbia and the Serbian authorities.

Finally, within the framework of this Forum and with the aim of empowering minorities to deal with hate speech, Albania recommends:

1. States should, with the participation of minorities, develop national legal frameworks to combat hate speech online, while ensuring respect for the right to freedom of opinion and expression
2. Legally strengthen and financially support national human rights and civil society institutions for an effective fight against the dissemination of hate speech online

Thank you.