

**Second Minority Forum (12-13 November 2009)**

**Statement by Dr. István Lakatos, Ambassador at Large for Human Rights  
Republic of Hungary**

**Agenda item III. Obstacles to effective political participation faced by minorities**

Madam Chairperson,  
Madam High Commissioner,  
Madam Independent Expert,  
Distinguished Delegates,

As mentioned in the previous statement delivered by the Hungarian delegation, effective political participation serves for minorities as a tool for the preservation of their identity. Unfortunately, wide variety of means are used in order for restricting minorities' involvement in political decision-making.

I find more or less the whole text of our Background Document highly relevant as description of the problem not only politically, but also professionally. I wish to express my specific admiration for Paragraph 21 clearly highlighting the fact that undue proficiency in, or the obligatory use of an official language may constitute a violation of Article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This problem could also be referred to in Paragraph 30 of our Background Document dealing with occurrences of indirect political discrimination.

In this context, I consider especially problematic, if language regulations introduce penalty or other punishments, thus creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear amongst peoples whose mother tongue differs from the official state language. I suggest mentioning, as a basic principle, in our final recommendation that nobody should be fined because of the use of her or his mother tongue.

A citizen can remain loyal to the State even if she or he prefers using the tongue of his birthplace village in everyday life, even if it does not coincide with the official language of the State. At the same time, without the undeniable right to use their language, minorities cannot credibly represent their interests at any level.

That leads us to the underlying importance of the use of the language of minorities. Due to our general commitment to preserve the traditionally multicultural character of our homeland and also that of the whole Europe, we have high expectations concerning the impact of the documents prepared by Madam Independent Expert as well as her collaborators.

Let me also express my specific concord with the approach of Chapter III of the Background Document. It reiterates again and again that special measures enhancing minorities' political participation must not be considered as discrimination of either the minority itself, or the majority of the population. I think this principle must become an international standard that should also appear in the national legislations throughout the world.

Thank you for your kind attention.