

**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA TO
THE UN OFFICE AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
IN GENEVA**

Check against delivery

Third Session of the UN Forum on Minorities

STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

HE Azis Polozani

Permanent Representative

Ambassador Plenipotentiary and Extraordinary

GENEVA, December 15, 2010

Madam Chairperson / Mr. President

The Republic of Macedonia attaches great importance to the rights of Minorities i.e. ethnic communities as defined in our Constitution. The amendments of the Constitution that we have adopted in 2001 are merely related to the improvement of the status and the rights of Minorities in our country. 17 Amendments to the Constitution were made in order to eliminate any eventual discrimination at all levels in the society and they are with the aim to strengthen the equality among the members of all ethnic communities in the Republic of Macedonia.

Furthermore, the Republic of Macedonia is fully committed to contribute on the ways and means of strengthening the application of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to Minorities. We are also determined to help to effectively implement the goals and objectives of the UN Declaration on Minorities.

Madam Chairperson / Mr. President,

Given the thematic focus of the Forum "Minorities and Effective Participation in Economic Life", we do consider the relation between the right to equal access to tertiary education and the enjoyment of the right to work are essential for full enjoyment of the rights of Minorities.

I would like to draw the attention to some important steps that my country has taken. In that regard, I would like to point out that equal access to education 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, including minorities and without discrimination, 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. The Law on higher education includes the measure of "positive discrimination". The 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. In addition, two amongst four established state universities are located in a city where majority of the population is Albanian. The instructions at most of the Universities are provided in Macedonian, Albanian and English language and in some of the Faculties in Turkish language as well.

In conclusion, I would like to underline that the Republic of Macedonia considers the work of the Forum on Minorities as very important in the process of protection and promotion of the rights of minorities and in that regard the role of the Independent Expert on minorities issues Ms. Guy McDougall.

Thank you.