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Working Session 7: Tolerance and non-discrimination I.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentleman,

Recognition of the civil and political rights the members of Balkan Egyptians community in some states have improved over past years. However, they are still vastly underrepresented in public office throughout Western Balkans, despite constituting significant minority in few countries of SSE.

The members of Balkan Egyptians' ethnic community are continuing to suffering discrimination in many fields in the states of the Western Balkans, for which there are numerous reports by a number of monitoring committees and commissions from the international organizations.

The worst situation is in Albania, where Balkan Egyptians consists around 10% of the total population, but the authorities are refusing to recognise them as separate national minority, to protect their human and minority rights, and to integrate them in the society.

A deep concern about the Egyptians' issue in Albania, expresses and AC of FCPNM, by the Council of Europe in its Second Opinion adopted on 29 May 2008, where a recommendation is given for the Albanian authorities to start an intensive dialogue with the Egyptians to discuss the necessary measures with a view to preserving their specific identity. But, unfortunately such a dialogue until now didn't start, yet!

Albanian authorities based on their prejudices and stereotypes for building a homogeneous nation-state, without any objective argument and using different methods to confuse the international community, deny the existence of Balkan Egyptians' minority in Albania. If we make an analysis of the official comments and opinions of Albanian authorities we may see a very unstable position without any objective basis.

Moreover, in another Balkan state- Montenegro, the members of Balkan Egyptians minority are suffering an indirect discrimination. There are not foundations in the public life of Montenegro for stereotypically using the acronym RAE (for Roma, Ashalie and Egyptians). Respecting of identity of the people, especially ethnic identity have to be a commitment by the state authorities, nor a subject of manipulation with tendency for assimilation.

AC of FCPNM on its opinions for Macedonia on two occasions (2005 and 2009) recommended that the authorities of Macedonia should put Egyptians under the protection of FCPNM. Such a dialog or negotiations didn't start, yet, and oppositely Balkan Egyptians as well as other smaller minorities that are not mentioned in a Preamble of the Constitution like Croatians, Montenegrins, Armenians, Russians, Polish, Slovenians etc., are discriminated and excluded from participation in public life and decision-making bodies in all level.

Recommendations:

1. High Commissioner for Protection of National Minorities by OSCE according to his mandate as well as reports from AC of FCPNM, ECRI and other international instruments to take an arbitrary role on solving the Balkan Egyptian issue in Albania.
2. International Community, including OSCE and its instruments, has to respect the international document on supervising the development of Macedonian multicultural society, with focus on all citizens without any discrimination of ethnic belonging, because Macedonia is continuing to develop as a bicultural society under the terminology of multiculturalism.
3. Authorities of Montenegro has stop with manipulation and discrimination of the members of Balkan Egyptians and to aloud the establishment of National Council of Balkan Egyptians national minority, as is for all other national minorities in Montenegro.