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Thursday 30 November, Item 2 – Socio-economic Empowerment

Intervention of the Council of Europe, by Vesna Crnić - Grotić, Member of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

Thank you, Chair,

The Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the only legally binding multilateral instruments for protecting national minorities and minority languages, celebrated this year their 25th anniversaries.

They are part of the Council of Europe's commitment towards national minorities' protection and "towards inclusive societies without marginalisation, exclusion, racism and intolerance", as reconfirmed by the Reykjavík Declaration in May this year.

They provide for effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities, including in socio-economic life. Our recommendations also reflect the firm conviction that such participation is crucial for enhancing social cohesion. Marginalising persons belonging to national minorities in socio-economic life has implications for society as a whole, fuelling negative stereotypes and excluding them from participating in public life.

Quality education, employment, access to health care and decent living conditions, including in light of the risks posed by environmental pollution and climate change, are some key issues.

Beyond facilitating access to the labour market or to services, languages can be a factor of economic development. Promoting minority languages, along with official languages, in economic and social life contributes to strengthening participation of national minorities. It also fosters social cohesion in raising the visibility and the sense of belonging to society. It is also important to include learning about minorities' history, culture, traditions and language, as well as their rights, in national curricula.

Moreover, intergovernmental work continues to promote equality for all and build more inclusive societies, for example with two recent recommendations on active political participation of national minority youth and Roma youth participation.