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COUNCIL OF EUROPE



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# Minorities and Minority Languages in a Changing Europe

Conference on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Framework  
Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European  
Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France  
Palais, room 1

18 – 19 June 2018

## **High Level Session: Minorities and Minority Languages in a Changing Europe**

**Statement by Mr Vigen Kocharyan, Deputy Minister of Justice of Armenia**

**18 June 2018**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to participate in this conference on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of two key Conventions of the Council of Europe.

An anniversary is a time to reflect on the past and to anticipate the future. Twenty years is enough time to assess the real progress which has been achieved, as well as to face new challenges and seek for new solutions.

For me this occasion also has some significant personal dimension. More than 20 years ago, when I was slightly younger, I worked on my PhD dissertation which was devoted to minority rights and was among the first which scrutinized the Framework convention, then not entered into force. At that time I couldn't suppose that 10 years later I would have the honor to become member of Advisory Committee of Framework Convention, and another 10 years later I would be that official who is responsible for elaborating the first standalone legislation on national minorities in my country.

Hence, in my view, within these 20 years we have number of reasons for feeling satisfied, but in the meantime, also for concerns.

This conference gives us an excellent opportunity to underline the importance of these two key Council of Europe instruments for the protection of national minorities, as well as to address all challenges to tackle in this field.

It is incontestable that the Framework Convention is a unique instrument of international law that provides excellent guidelines to states' policies and practices. It contains specific, action-oriented, substantive standards, which correspond to a large number of positive State obligations of utmost significance. Both these instruments provide an indispensable basis and give valuable support to the national legislations to ensure the protection of national minorities' rights.

During this period a number of key principles of minority protection have been clarified and introduced into practice, many answers were found due to activities of monitoring mechanisms - the Advisory Committee of Framework Convention and Committee of Experts of the Charter.

Dear colleagues,

This era of digital transformation impacts on the situation of the national minorities.

As all we know, current technologies provide almost unlimited possibilities for spreading hate speech and fake news, undermining tolerance and trust among communities. Therefore, alongside with unstoppable development of these technologies we should continue our search for effective response to these destructive activities. Thus, new challenges are added to the traditional ones and calling for our immediate attention.

But meanwhile we must value new horizons which the digital transformation opens and creates new ways of socialization and maintenance of cultural identity. Distance and borders are not obstacles anymore and people can interact, use their language and enjoy their culture in this new digital space.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On this special occasion, I would like to also address to recent developments related to the protection of national minorities in my country.

The Republic of Armenia is now in the process of large scale reforms, which will also ensure more legal guarantees for the protection of minority rights. Thus, we have already drafted a comprehensive standalone Law “On National Minorities”, which, I hope, will be adopted in upcoming month. The adoption of the new law is one of the requirements of the New Constitution. It should be highlighted that the Draft Law was sent to the expert opinion of the monitoring bodies of the Council of Europe. We highly appreciate provided expert opinions, which were very useful in the process of finalizing the draft law. We are grateful for the assistance of the Council of Europe and are confident that our cooperation will lead us toward the law that meets the highest standards.

Being committed to the principles of the Framework convention and the Charter, Armenia will continue to undertake all efforts for full realization of the rights of national minorities as an integral part of the development of society as a whole and within a democratic framework based on human dignity, equality and respect.