



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Presence in Albania**

Political and Public Affairs Unit

**HEAD OF PRESENCE REMARKS AT *DISCRIMINATION: PERCEPTION AND
CURRENT CHALLENGES* EVENT**

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Commissioner Baraku, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

It is a pleasure for me to be with you today and to see so many young faces amongst you.

I know that all of you, and many more all over Albania care about the fight against discrimination.

I am also sure that many of you feel a great passion and emotion about the respect for human rights.

That is exactly why we are all here this morning.

Most of us in this room are concerned about the many different kinds of discrimination from which people have to suffer every day.

We are not happy when we see injustice and inequity.

We are keen to fight these social evils in a resolute but peaceful manner

We do not have to be persuaded about the need to protect human rights, to value diversity and to fight ignorance and discrimination in whatever form it appears.

And even for ourselves, it is important to stay conscious about it and to learn more.

Those of us who work in the area of human rights campaign without stopping to find the most effective ways of improving the human rights situation and to see a higher level of equality of opportunity for all.

One way how to do it can be seen here today.

Picturing incidents and telling stories can contribute in tackling this process, in starting to get a hold of it, make the problem more visible and understandable, and open ways to counter it..

Images and words can definitely challenge perceptions and test prejudices.

They remind people that barriers still exist – barriers to an equal society.

And sometimes, they do inspire change. I surely hope for more changes in this field.

Another way that we can work towards a more just and fair Albania is by telling our stories when we are treated unfairly.

As you may know, Commissioner Baraku investigates complaints under the Law for Protection from Discrimination.

This law is a very good law. .

Yet, this Law will not be able to resolve all the problems we know still exist.

It will not convert an unjust society into a just and fair one. For that it clearly needs more.

It relies on people like you, who will stand up and be counted when discrimination occurs.

While there are sometimes understandable reasons why people facing discrimination face difficulties in making a complaint, the sad reality is that if people being exposed to such discrimination do not act then discrimination will continue against them, and against others.

Of course, we know that discrimination is very often not only hard to prove but also often very uncomfortable and embarrassing to those it has affected.

That is probably why cases of discrimination are in far to many cases underreported. They do not dare to tell about their suffering.

It takes, in fact, a lot of courage to report and file a complaint.

This is why the human factor is so important key to affecting real change.

That is why making a complaint can help not only the individual who suffered from discrimination but also many others suffering similar forms of discrimination.

However, complaint mechanisms cannot be the only answer to this problem.

We also need more education on human rights issues so that when discrimination does occur, everyone has the knowledge and confidence to address it.

Education is vital to building a fair and socially inclusive society.

It also encourages greater respect for diversity - whether on the basis of race, gender or disability or any other kind of discrimination for that matter.

Albania has undertaken first important steps in the right direction.

The approval of the Law for Protection from Discrimination and the establishment of the Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination is a great beginning.

More can, and more should be done towards understanding the multiple and complex reasons why people are marginalised.

I am sure that the Commissioner will continue to work hard towards improving the human rights situation further and to help strive towards a more equal and just society.

The OSCE Presence in Albania will continue to support the Commissioner in her tasks.

Active contribution from as many people as possible is key.

However, even when supported the Commissioner cannot do it alone.

Everyone who is discriminated against or everyone who sees unfair treatment should tell their story, lodge their complaint and work to tear down the barriers to an equal and just society.

So keep up the good work!

Let me leave you with a quotation from the French essayist Albert Camus who once wrote,

“Don't walk in front of me; I may not follow. Don't walk behind me; I may not lead. Just walk beside me and be my friend.”

Thank you very much.

ENDS