

Item 2

Intervention of the delegation of Romania

Thank you Mrs. President,

Romania associates itself to the statement of the European Union.

We consider that the theme of this edition is somewhat optimistic as it seems to consider that the freedom of religion is a problem solved and the international community could move forward.

Romania considers that freedom of religion and belief is the premise that ought to observe in order to guarantee the fulfilment of the rights of all people, regardless of religion and belief. Also, the right of changing its own religion and belief is essential for a democratic society.

The debate on the religious freedom demonstrates once again the fact that the individual is the ultimate holder of the human rights. Indeed, freedom of belief strongly and urgently needs to be protected not only against the interference of authorities, but also against any external pressure and intimidation likely to affect the right of persons belonging to national minorities to freely manifest his or her religion or belief. It is also highly important for the authorities to allow persons belonging to national minorities living on their territory and holding the citizenship of that country to establish religious institutions, organizations and associations, in accordance with the provisions of the international instruments and to take urgent and serious measures against any act that might interfere with this fundamental right.

In this context, Romania deplores the events that occurred on October 2013 when several Romanian Christians from Podgorac (North-Eastern part of Serbia) were questioned by the Serbian Intelligence (BIA) on their participation to the religious ceremony performed on 20 October 2013. Such actions are highly likely to intimidate and to affect the right to freely practice the religion of persons belonging to the Romanian minority. The Romanian authorities express their concern over the situation created in Podgorac and strongly reaffirm that no one should be subject to pressures or intimidations based on her/his decision to exercise a fundamental right guaranteed at international level.

Mrs. President,

We do consider that the relationship between states and their own citizens regarding the freedom of religion has its own particularities in each UN Member State. Complex historical particularities do not allow the definition of a model in this respect.

This is why we consider that any discussion on the rights of the persons belonging to religious minorities needs to start from the premise that freedom of religion and belief needs to be ensured by the states the citizens live in. The states need to fulfil all their obligations undertaken in accordance with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, as well as the political and legal commitments undertaken at universal and regional levels.