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PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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STATEMENT
BY

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AT THE PERMANENT MISSION OF ALBANIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

AGENDA ITEM 69 (b and c)
Promotion and protection of human rights

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Merci Monsieur le Président,

Je voudrais commencer par vous féliciter de la manière dont vous vous acquittez de la tâche importante à diriger avec succès et compétence les travaux de la 3ème Commission. Je voudrais également remercier le Secrétaire Général Adjoint pour les droits de l'homme, les présidents des organes de traités ainsi que les rapporteurs spéciaux pour les différents rapports présentés à cette Commission. Ma délégation s'associe à la déclaration faite plus tôt par l'Union européenne. Je voudrais, à ce stade, faire quelques remarques à titre national.

Mr. Chair,

Back in 2007, the United Nations General Assembly took a very important step towards the protection of human rights -- by calling for worldwide adoption of moratoriums on the capital punishment. Ever since that landmark decision, every time this important issue has been taken up by the General Assembly, more recently in 2012, the trend against the death penalty has gained further momentum in every region and across legal systems, traditions, customs and religious backgrounds.

The UNGA resolution calling for a moratorium on the use of the death penalty encompasses a much wider action than a mere moratorium on the application of the death penalty. It implies, *inter alia*, a progressive reduction of the number of offences for which capital punishment may be imposed, as well as a progressive restriction of the use of the death penalty. We believe that this represents a natural progression towards full worldwide abolition.

We further express deep concern on the continuing use of the death penalty. This past year we have noted with great concern several setbacks on the death penalty in a number of countries. We call on countries that have resumed executions to reconsider their decision.

Mr. Chair,

Albania remains deeply concerned on the increasing number of acts of violence and intolerance against individuals, including persons belonging to religious minorities and other communities in various parts of the world.

As a country that takes pride of its century-long traditions of religious harmony and tolerance, the issues of dialogue among civilizations and cultures, inter-confessional concord, fight against anti-Semitism, religious and all other forms of discrimination, youth education to tolerance and non-discrimination, have taken central stage in Albania's foreign policy priorities.

In the above context Albania hosted on 21 and 22 May 2013 the OSCE High-Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, jointly with the Ukrainian Chairmanship-in-Office of the OSCE.

The conference aimed to sustain high-level political attention to the effective implementation of OSCE's commitments on tolerance and non-discrimination. It provided an opportunity to present examples of good practices by participating States and civil society; to discuss how initiatives can be replicated; and to consider how OSCE institutions and other intergovernmental organizations have supported efforts to promote mutual respect and understanding, including through human rights education on tolerance and non-discrimination.

In line with its international commitments, Albania strongly advocates for the need to maintain these topics high up in the OSCE agenda, as they constitute matters of crucial importance for European and global security and stability in the 21st century. This has become all the more necessary in light of the ongoing economic hardship that has hit Europe, hence heightening tensions that threaten the cohesion and the stability of the OSCE region.

Protecting, promoting and respecting human rights is a core commitment and a central priority for Albania and this is among the reasons my country has decided to present its candidature for membership of the UN Human Rights Council for the term 2015-2017, at the elections to take place next year in the UN General Assembly. If elected, as a member of the Council, Albania would further strengthen its efforts in working towards protecting and promoting human rights with all Members of the United Nations.

Mr President,

The situation of the human right throughout the region of Southeast Europe has dramatically improved during the last decade, in all countries without any exception. We are particularly encouraged by the speedy and overall progress made in this regard in Kosovo. While no country can claim to have the perfect situation in human right issues, the progress made in Kosovo, especially since the declaration of Independence in 2008, is truly remarkable.

A clear testimony of overall progress is the level of relations Kosovo has built with the European Union. The 2013 EC progress report states *"2013 has been a historic year for Kosovo on its path to the European Union. The decisions of the Council in June authorizing the opening of negotiations for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) represent the start of a significant new phase in EU-Kosovo relations."* These negotiations formally started last week.

Albania attaches great importance to the right of individuals to elect and to be elected and, in this context, looks forward to the successful holding of the November 3, 2013 elections in Kosovo. Albania welcomes the decision by the European Union to deploy an Election Observation Mission to observe the municipal elections. These will be the first elections conducted throughout the territory of Independent Kosovo, including in the North. A total of 22 political entities, eight Kosovo Serb, eight Kosovo Albanian, two Bosniak, two Ashkali, one Turkish and one Montenegrin, have registered to contest the local elections in the five municipalities in northern Kosovo. Albania encourages every Kosovo citizen

to participate and vote, as the best expression of democracy and human rights.

Mr. Chairman,

Albania supports unreservedly all efforts, in the region and elsewhere, to bring justice and avoid impunity. In this respect, Albania is deeply concerned on the fate of more than 1800 still missing persons in Kosovo, most of them Albanians, fourteen years after the conflict. Years have passed and the fate of the majority of the missing of the conflict is still unresolved, with their families still waiting for justice.

When dealing with the past, Mr. Chairman, it is crucial that everything is based on facts, proofs and evidence and in respect to the rule of law. Propaganda, the baseless rhetoric like the repeated mentioning of the infamous Dick Marty report do not help, either the truth or justice. Throughout history, propaganda has rather been used as a weapon and it has never contributed to reconciliation.

We truly believe that our region has more, much more to gain by looking forward and build on the best examples of bilateral and regional cooperation with the contribution of all and with benefits for all. We think this is key and this should take our efforts and energy.

I thank you.