**Fjala e hapjes, Z. Villano Qiriazi, Kreu i Departamentit të Arsimit, Këshilli i Evropës**

Good morning to all the participants so dear Deputy Minister, chairwoman of the Authority of information on former State security documents, dear partners of Council of Europe here in Albania, ladies and gentlemen. So on behalf of the education department I would like to welcome all of you here in this two-day seminar that we are organizing in cooperation with the Authority for information on former State security documents. This event today brings together many participants from diverse professional backgrounds educators, academicians, representatives of museum, museum and archives institutions policy makers and parliamentarians. As well and this is very significant.

Looking back and learning from the historical past in order to better understand the present and ensure that the past does not repeat itself. Requires a unified approach by all those involved in education policy and the implementation of the education policy as well as intellectual honesty open mindedness, respect for historical truth, critical evaluation but also civil Civic courage. So together with my colleagues here at the Council of Tirana office I warmly welcome the proposal of the Authority for information of former State Security documents. We had a very constructive meeting some months ago with the Authority and many colleagues there and then the request was to support the work of the Authority that and to introduce in our current program on education for democracy in formal education. This program is founded by Swedish development agency. So within the framework of this program to pay more attention to the teaching of history through the use of archives in order to develop student’s skills and competencies but also their critical historical thinking which is a kind of key competence for the 21st century. So this initiative this comes at a special time also for the Council of the Europe.

This year was a very important year for the Council. This year in may in rave under the islandic present of the committee of ministers the Council of Europe organized the fourth summit of heads states and governments. The main topic of this summit was of course the situation in Ukraine but the heads of states and governments adopted also other important documents and one of them which is called 12 principles of democracy. Call on member states to strengthen the role of the organization in education policy as well. So this declaration but also other resolutions this year we had also another important event in the education department we organized a ministerial conference at the end of September and then we adopted a new strategy for 10 years for the education sector in the Council of Europe that we called Learners first and then this new strategy is organized around three main pillars. One of them is revitalizing the civic mission of education. A second one is the strengthening of social dimension and responsiveness of education to the diversity of the needs of students and the diversity of the different local context. And the third pillar is advancing education through a human rights based approach when it comes to the digital transformation of education.

So this new strategy is going to influence our work for 10 years to come and this new documents that have been adopted by heads of states and ministers have created a long term vision for the education policies in member countries and this vision puts at the center the learner. While at the same time we are asking member states to develop flexible curricula and study programs to create supportive learning environments for all the learners to increase the autonomy of the learners to create more opportunities for professional education for all the teachers but also to push more on a participatory and democratic governance of education systems and institutions. So the real declaration goes a little bit further and one of the big objectives that heads of states and governments are asking us is to work I order to provide to all young people and children with the necessary references to grow up with democratic values and principles. So instilling these values and principles through the teaching of history is at the heart of this commitment and so the history of totalitarianism with its hard lessons about the fragile nature of human rights and freedoms and the human cost of absolute power is more relevant than ever.

So our word is also changing rapidly you know very well the situation right now in Europe also in the middle east extremism is on rise the actions such as Russia’s and aggression against Ukraine are changing the global dynamic. And the Russian governments for example is investing a lot in producing an alternative history that denies the existence of Ukraine and has recently led to the production of new textbooks for secondary school students in the Russian Federation. In this way disinformation and alternative facts are not only promoted by individuals or Fringe groups on the internet but can also form an integral part of revisionist state policies that pose a threat to peace in the European continent. So in this circumstances as we seek to build a future based on democratic values and human rights it is essential that young people have a critical understanding of history since the beginning of moral cooperation in the field of education in the Council of Europe and history teaching. In particular, our organization has shown an unwavering commitment to providing her history to education with multiple perspectives and based on primary documents and sources.

More recently as was also underlined before the observatory on history teaching in Europe of which Albania is a member states a long with 15 other European countries has analyzed data collected in the 16 member countries including a survey of more than 6 500 history teachers in its first report. That was just mentioned by providing insight into the different ways in which history is taught across Europe of the observatory aims to promote forms of history education that include multiple perspectives develop critical thinking skills promote empathy and there by strengthening democratic culture in all our member states. One of the findings of the report is that history teachers that were you know survey. History teachers value out comes related to critical history thinking and existence in democratic societies. So it is encouraging to see that teachers want to go beyond memorizing dates and facts. Only 54% of teachers surveyed consider this important or more important but instead teachers want their students to develop historical thinking skills 82% consider this important or more important. What’s more the vast majority of teachers say they want their pupils and students to developer the skills to live together in diverse and democratic societies. So I believe that our seminar will be an important step in this direction the focus is on the use of state security documents in particular those in the secret police file archives.

These documents are not just papers as you know very well. They are silent witnesses to a past that Albanians must confront with honesty and courage by integrating these primary sources into the history curriculum and other pedagogical activities the intention is to offer students more than just history is to give them a tangible link to the past where history is given human faces as we saw also at the beginning of this meeting through the film that was prepared. Archival documents have the power to transform abstract historical events into real life story. They act as a bridge between the past and the present and their testimonies continue to influence society today. So this seminar is also a demonstration of cooperation and partnership with national and international actors formal and informal education and I would like to take this opportunity to extend a special welcome here in Tirana but also online to the international experts who have so graciously responded to the Council of Europe call and to the representative of museums, archives, educational institutions from different countries who have come together to make this partnership possible. So this energy is essential for a comprehensive, balanced and sensitive approach to teaching about Albania’s dictatorial past.

Working with museums and archives brings authenticity and depth to the education experience allowing students to engage directly with primary sources artifacts and individual stories and this engagement is essential for developing a deeper and more empathetic understanding of history. So the special role of technology can’t be overlooked of course and in digital age access to information educational resources is increasing mediated by technology the ambition of the Authority to build this open platform for teaching about history will make historical resources more accessible to students but also to teachers and so these platforms can offer interactive learning experiences, digital archives and then virtual visits making history more engaging and relevant for today’s digital generation.

In conclusion may the seminar be more than academic exercise maybe a significant contribution to preparing Albania society for a future where the past is not a source of division but a foundation for unity and progress. So thank you very much and I wish you a very successful conference.