

**Opening speech of the Albanian Minister of Education and Sports, Ms. Lindita Nikolla**

**At the regional conference “Embracing diversity through education”**

**6-7 November 2013, Tirana, Albania**

It is a special honor and an immense pleasure to host this conference. I fully believe that this conference is an excellent opportunity to bring together people who have education at heart, who work every day in the education sector and for education in the region of South East Europe. I fully believe in this conference as an excellent opportunity for all of us to share our vision for a quality education for all students, starting from recognition of what we have achieved until now and what is needed to be done further on.

The path of our region in joining the European Union requires the fulfillment of standards, for building education systems that provide quality education to all students. Quality and inclusiveness must be the key words of any policy and any strategy that we undertake. Not only because this is the right of any human being, but particularly because the pace and the dynamics of development of the European societies, ask for a skilled workforce, ready to face the labor market requirements potentially. If this is achieved, the result will be development of our countries and good quality of life.

The quality of education for all children, is a precondition to ensure the quality of life to all of them who will be the working force of the future, the cradle of future families and responsible citizens of future societies.

To all of you present here today, it is not new the statement that education is a complicated, difficult system, with many challenges ahead, whose successes are not immediately visible and measurable. We work today to educate the future citizen, those who will be part of the European family. We work today, to make sure that every child, from a disadvantaged family or from a family with economic difficulties, a child with learning challenges, a child from a community of another ethnicity, language, tradition or culture, even the child with different abilities, will feel comfortable, accepted and valued and will benefit equally from the education system. This way they will be part of the society later and build a good life.

At the end of the day, the work of our ministries, our schools, our teachers and all institutions that work for education, but also the work of the parents, families and communities must have a common target: learning, learning, learning.

Many efforts, I would say for the wider region of SEE, have been put forward by various community based organizations, local or international organizations. I will not mention them because there are a number of them, who are present here today. All these efforts are of course a valuable contribution for a better education. Thank you and congratulations to all of them.

On behalf of the Albanian Ministry of Education and Sports, I reiterate our support and commitment to make the school an open, friendly and dear place for children, to achieve a quality and effective education for all.

Finally, allow me to thank the European Union and the Council of Europe for the special support they are offering to achieve quality and inclusive education in our region, especially through the Regional Joint Project.

I wish you all a warm welcome in my country, my Albania, and I wish you spend here three fruitful but also pleasant days. I wish success to the entire group and the participants of this conference.