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**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION
FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES**

**COMMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF LIECHTENSTEIN ON THE OPINION
OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL
MINORITIES IN LIECHTENSTEIN**

1. Introduction

The Government of Liechtenstein welcomes the opportunity to comment on the report of the Advisory Committee since it attaches great importance to the mechanism for the protection of national minorities provided for by the Framework Convention. It is for this reason that Liechtenstein has ratified the Framework Convention as an act of solidarity in the view of the objectives of the Convention. The remarks under section 2.1 are made in a spirit of constructive and ongoing dialogue with the Advisory Committee. The comments addressed to the Committee of Ministers are to be found under section 2.2.

2. Comments on the opinion of the Advisory Committee

2.1. Comments on the specific comments in respect of Articles 1 – 19

With regard to the asylum requests mentioned in paragraph 15 of the report, the Government of Liechtenstein shares the view of the Advisory Committee according to which the promotion by the authorities of a spirit of tolerance and mutual respect between all persons living on the territory of Liechtenstein is important. The issue mentioned in paragraph 15, however, goes beyond the scope of the Framework Convention since it concerns in the case of Liechtenstein foreigners and asylum seekers.

As regards asylum seekers, it can be stated that in the period from 1998 to 2000 as many as 600 refugees (i.e. about 2% of the residing population), most of them from the former Yugoslavia, found shelter in Liechtenstein. Desirous of ensuring entry into the country without excessive bureaucracy to persons seeking protection from the armed conflict in Kosovo, Liechtenstein decided at a very early stage to grant blanket protection to the refugees.¹ After the fighting ended, Liechtenstein participated in Switzerland's highly regarded repatriation assistance programme for Kosovo refugees. Most of the refugees took part in the programme and returned to their homeland.²

In order to educate the population and, in particular, young people, on the situation of refugees as well as on the national refugee policy and, therefore, to combat prejudice and prevent xenophobic tendencies, various information activities were conducted in schools and in the Youth Parliament in 2000. Refugee children are required to attend school, in accordance with the Refugees Act³ and with the ruling of the Supreme

¹ In accordance with art. 55 of the Refugees Act, LGBI. 1998 No. 107.

² Because refugees in Liechtenstein were allowed to work (Art. 32 of the Refugees Act, LGBI. 1998 No. 107), they were able to accumulate savings for their return during their stay in Liechtenstein, and this, coupled with the financial support that they received from the Government under the repatriation assistance programme, subsequently made it considerably easier for returnees to make a new start in their homeland. Some 120 persons, most of them from Kosovo, still remain in Liechtenstein as asylum seekers.

³ Art. 32 of the Refugees Act, LGBI. 1998 No. 107.