

Dear distinguished guests,

It is a pleasure to be here at this historic occasion in Vlorë

I want to thank everyone for coming here.

Let me first start with introducing myself and the organization I work for. My name is Jeroen Zandberg. I am from the Netherlands and I work for InterNations Exchange. Also called INEX. INEX is led by His Excellency Yohan Byrde, an experienced diplomat and European Union Commissioner and United Nations Human Rights Chairman, who you probably all know very well by now. INEX is an organization that offers a platform for nations and peoples to work on the international political stage. We provide access to key politicians and diplomats from established nations as well as international organisations, like the United Nations and the European Parliament.

I have been involved in the campaign for more rights for Chameria for some time now and went to many countries for this political and diplomatic campaign. We went to Israel, Italy, Greece, San Marino, the Vatican, Monaco, Belgium, Luxemburg, the Netherlands and many other countries in Europe to meet with politicians and diplomats to explain about Chameria and ask for assistance to solve the human rights issues. In all the countries that we visited we were met by government officials with an open mind. Most of them had never heard about Chameria before. However, all of them were eager to learn more and offered assistance in one way or another to get Chameria on the table at international institutions.

I can say with confidence that there are now a great number of key politicians and diplomats in many European countries who now know about Chameria. They know about the history and they know about the continuing struggle to get justice for the Cham people. In that sense the diplomatic missions of this year have been a great success and put the case of Chameria on the international agenda.

GENOCIDE

In July, together with His Excellency Yohan Byrde, I visited Vlorë and other cities in southern Albania where we talked with survivors of the genocide of 1944. We also visited the memorial in Konispol. Most of you will probably have visited the memorial in Konispol at some time in your life. It is a very impressive site and commemorates one of the darkest times in the history of the Albanian peoples. The memorial lists the names of those who were killed. It lists their city and the age of the person when he or she was killed. Murdered, by forces who targeted people specifically because of their ethnic background being Chamerian Albanian. One of the survivors told us the following story of her family during the genocide:

“The first massacre was in Parathene. It was the first day of the Pasar that we had. My father had two sisters and the Greeks, they put a knife inside their bodies. My father asked the family to move very fast from there because it is very dangerous for the children to be there because the Greeks, they are coming.

We escaped our village and came to Filat. But it was a bigger massacre than in our village. The women who were pregnant had their children pulled from their stomach. The younger girls and women were sexually abused. Because the Greeks, they lied to us. They told everyone to come back here because they would be safe, but it was a lie. It was only a motive to bring everyone together to kill them.”

During these massacres many people died and the survivors fled to Albania. The objective of the aggressors was met. The light had gone out for Chameria. Or so they hoped. Yes, the ethnic cleansing meant that the Chamerian people were no longer able to work their fields and live in their houses. The sounds of the Chamerian Albanian language had disappeared from Chameria and had been replaced by Greek.

But the light had not gone out for Chameria. The light remained in the hearts and minds of the Chamerian people. In the following years this light kept shining brighter and brighter until it lightened also the hearts of all Albanians as well. In 1994 the Albanian government recognized the genocide and erected the memorial in Konispol. A monument that symbolizes a great disaster and reminds us that we need to remember all the big things of life and forget about the small things that divide us. In the face of injustice and disaster you must not become angry but behave like strong and determined people. Determined to live in dignity and together work for a better future.

The past is over and it is the future that calls us now. That future is not one of resting but of striving so that we may fulfil the pledges we have so often taken and the one we shall take today. A pledge to our fathers and mothers, our grandfathers and grandmothers, that one day they will be able to go back to Chameria and live in safety, in a vibrant Chamerian Albanian culture. The service of Chameria means the service of the millions who suffer and suffered.

As long as there are tears and suffering, so long the work will not be over. And so we have to labour and to work, and work hard, to make these dreams real. Those dreams are for Chameria, but they are also for the world, because all the nations and peoples are closely knit together today.

SELF-DETERMINATION

It is the universal right to self-determination. The right of a people to decide their own destiny, to make their way in freedom. And Chameria has chosen this path. If there is to be a criterion of a

people's preparedness for self-government, then it is their readiness to assume the responsibilities of ruling themselves. For who but a people themselves can say when they are prepared? How can others judge when that moment has arrived in the destiny of a people? They can't. It is only the people themselves who can.

Several major milestones mark this road to self-determination. First, is the declaration of independence that was declared on 30 October 2016 by Festim Lato. The second major event was the acceptance of the constitution of Chameria and the installation of the new Chamerian government. I was so fortunate to be able to work for and be present at the launch of the constitution and the government. On 9 September 2017, the constitution that forms the legal body of Chameria was presented by, again, President Festim Lato, who has moved to the forefront and presented himself as a true leader of his people. His cabinet was formed on that day as well, and together they work to get the rights of Chameria internationally recognized.

IDENTITY

A crucial effort to get the rights of Chameria recognized is to give all Chamerian people an identity, because only then will they truly be Chamerian. The right to an identity is a universal human right. It gives people their dignity and gives freedom. With an identity you matter. You can vote. You can travel. You can participate in all parts of life. The government of Festim Lato therefore has started a process to provide all those who consider themselves Cham the ability to get a passport and to become an official citizen of the Republic of Chameria. There are already a great number of citizenship registrations and the Chamerian nation will grow very fast. Soon it will be powerful enough to claim back the rights to the land of Chameria. I hope that most of you will also register to become a citizen of Chameria soon.

THANK

Festim Lato, the president of the government of the Republic of Chameria is working very hard to make the Chamerian nation strong and part of the international community. INEX president Yohan Byrde is his Special advisor, Secretary of State and Ambassador. Together they have opened diplomatic and political talks to get the rights back for Chameria. President Festim Lato has been struggling for Chameria for over 16 years now and is the main driving force of the resurgence of the Chamerian identity. He is supported by his special advisor and secretary of State, Ambassador Yohan Byrde who is a European Union Commissioner and has more than 28 years of experience on the highest political scene. Together, with support from all of you, they will be able to get true self-determination for the Cham people.

I feel fortunate to be part of this team and I hope that very soon Chameria will be recognized and that all of you can travel and move to Chameria in freedom.

Thank you very much.