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April 18, 2006

The Honorable Olli REHN  
Commissioner for Enlargement

The Honorable Michael LEIGH  
Director General for Enlargement

European Commission  
Rue de la Loi 200  
1049 Brussels  
Belgium

Re: EU Enlargement and the Need for Romania to Respect the Rights  
of the Hungarian Minority and the Rule of Law

Dear Commissioner Rehn and Director General Leigh:

The American Hungarian Federation is a one-hundred-year-old umbrella organization that has for decades monitored the situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania. This letter is written in connection with reports that in your view, conditions relating to the Hungarian historical community living in Romania are satisfactory.

We respectfully disagree, as the evidence is to the contrary. The irrefutable record demonstrates that Romania must take concrete steps before its laws and practices conform to European and Western standards relating to human and minority rights. A few examples of Romania's less than exemplary record will suffice. More than a decade after the collapse of Communism, Romania has yet to fulfill its promises to its more than 1.5 million strong ethnic Hungarians. While Bucharest lavishly funds the Orthodox Church that is engaged in a church building spree, it has returned to the rightful Hungarian owners only a tiny fraction of the more than 2000 religious and communal properties illegally seized from them during the Communist era. Romania daily flouts the constitutional guarantee relating to the right to an education in the mother tongue. Romania has even failed to restore the independent Hungarian state university in Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár, despite an open letter signed by 71 distinguished international scholars, including Nobel Laureates and Wolf Prize Laureates urging the re-establishment of the Bolyai University. And Romania virtually treats the legitimate request for autonomy of the Szekelyland as an act of treason, while it refuses to enact a long-awaited minorities law.

The Honorable Olli REHN  
The Honorable Michael LEIGH  
April 18, 2006  
Page two

Although we are hopeful that Romania will qualify for EU membership, it needs to vigorously adopt much-needed reforms in the foregoing and related areas. Romania can look to several European models, including Finland and the rights granted its Swedish-speakers. Indeed, Romania should be encouraged in this accession period and beyond to build a tolerant society by respecting the rights of its Hungarian minority and the rule of law, thereby converting promises into deeds. This would not only promote genuine democracy in Romania and defuse tensions caused by discrimination and intolerance, it would also strengthen the EU as it gains new members.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank Koszorus, Jr.  
First Vice President

Stefan Fedor  
President