

ITEM VI: Equal Access to Quality Education for Minorities

There are three points my delegation would wish to highlight here.

Legal guarantees – First of all states should undertake the commitment to promote equal opportunities for access to education at all levels for persons belonging to national minorities, primarily by means of providing legal guarantees. According to article 6, paragraph 1 of the RA Law on Education, the right to education is guaranteed regardless of nationality, race, gender, religion, political or other convictions, social origin, property status or other circumstances.

Another obstacle for the access to education for minority representatives may be its **high cost**.

States have to ensure the financial accessibility of education for members of minorities. In this respect, let me note that secondary education in public educational institutions of Armenia is free. As for higher and special education, every citizen has the right to free higher and other special education in public educational institutions on competitive basis.

And finally, particular attention should be paid to the **location of schools and other educational institutions**. In areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities traditionally or in substantial numbers, if there is sufficient demand, state authorities shall endeavor to ensure, as far as possible and within the framework of their education systems, that persons belonging to those minorities have adequate opportunities for getting education.

The learning environment

As for the issue of the learning environment, my delegation would like to stress the responsibility of states to encourage an atmosphere of tolerance and dialogue between cultures, and take effective steps to promote mutual respect, understanding and cooperation between all the people living on their territories regardless of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious affiliation, particularly in the areas of education, culture and media. In Armenia the State Program on Language Policy reiterates the respect for linguistic and cultural diversity and the encouragement of the development of national minority languages and cultures. In this light, states, where appropriate, have to take measures in the fields of education and research to foster knowledge of the culture, history, language and religion of their national minorities and of the majority. Another important step to create and maintain a vigorous learning environment is the provision of adequate opportunities for teacher training and access to textbooks, as well as facilitation contacts among students and teachers of different communities.

The Relationship Between De-Segregation Strategies, Cultural Autonomy and Integration in the Quest for Social Cohesion

With respect to the issue of integration, it should be pointed out that there are some impediments created by the national minorities themselves that hinder their effective integration into social, economic and cultural life and, thus, full realization of their human rights. The thing is that, because of the realities coming from the Soviet times, a significant portion of national minorities in the Republic of Armenia (essentially all, except Yezidis and Kurds) prefer education in the Russian language. The Law on language and education of the Republic of Armenia gives them that right. However, that makes it difficult for them to learn the Armenian language, which, in turn, creates difficulties for their full integration into the country's social-cultural life, their further professional education in Armenia's state professional educational institutions, and their involvement in the government system. In this regard, as a mean of addressing the afore-mentioned problem, we would propose to include in the recommendation that there should be a mandatory study of the State's official language (Article 2 of the Law on Language stipulates that in national minority communities, general education can be organized in the mother tongue under state curriculum and with mandatory studies of the Armenian language under state sponsorship).

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