

Thank you. I would like to share my experience about good practices from a minority perspective, good practices implemented by themselves in the republic of Latvia. It means an active role of minority groups in promoting principles of the Declaration, diversity, universal human dignity and multiculturalism.

I represent the Russian minority in Latvia, which is a member state of the European Union. Unfortunately, the relationship between the two big communities – Latvia ethnic and Russian linguistic group, became a struggle for or against dominance of Latvian restrictive ethnic nationalism. Nevertheless, Russian language is the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> widespread language in the European Union and it is a mother tongue of 40 per cent of the Latvian population. In these circumstances, we see the role of minority organisations and advocates in Latvia as follows: firstly, it is maintain a dialogue within the minority community concerning self-identification in current historical and political circumstances to resist marginalisation and to escape the assimilation agenda proposed by some official authorities; second, it is a dialogue with the national authorities and political bodies insisting the right on effective participation in political life and especially addressing the problem of long-term non-citizens; and the third is cooperation with international organisations elaborating common standards and recommendations.

I would like to share experience of participating in referendums on symbolic issues it is the second state language in February this year. The referendum campaign for Russian language aimed awareness raising and equal dialogue about cultural, educational and linguistic rights between majority and minority and not a second state language as such. It is to mention that 14 per cent of permanent inhabitants of Latvia are long-term non-citizens and all of these people are representative of ethnic minorities. But because of the domination discourse already mentioned, the referendum was interpreted by officials as a threat to public order and the dialogue was not achieved. Therefore, we think it is still important raise awareness that promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to minorities contribute to the political and social stability of the state in which they live and not as a threat to public order. Thank you very much.