

## **6th session of the Forum on Minority Issues**

### **IV. Promotion and protection of the identity of religious minorities**

Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation

Thank you very much, madam chair and independent experts.

I am an Episcopal leader of the Russian church, and of course the question of protection of ethnic relations and religious relations is an issue that is becoming ever more topical. The issue of tolerance towards ethnic minorities is very important issue and this is an area where government is willing to have a great impact with legislation. There is a council for cooperation with religious organisations under the president of the Russian Federation, where Protestants, Catholics and other religious communities have their representations. This council has a commission within the Russian Duma and in the council of the federations and they have also received representatives of religious minorities. Where there is a trend that has been observed that the council within the governor shifts is one within this position but also being respected and also relations between the religious and the ethnic minorities at the level of the regions and at the federal entities. A special role played here is being played by the council for understanding between religious and confessional groups. The Orthodox Center for Human Rights is an association which plays an important role in protecting the rights of religious minorities. There is the law on the protection of the feelings of religious minorities, which has had an important role and defending the rights of religious minorities in the courts (...) and elsewhere. The president of the Russian Federation recently said in his statement that there is a direct responsibility of the governors of the Russian federal regions for the implementation of this law the regional, municipal and other levels. Recently, there has been an important document which was published that there is the religious code of the Russian federation which was presented by one of the oppositional parties and a few days ago, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November, the president of Russia confirmed the concept of security for the Russian Federation where there is special mention of society as a whole and the role played by religious minorities. We would also like to encourage our authorities when they are now discussing amendments to the Russian constitution of Russia in this direction. I am sure that we will be successful in our task.

Thank you very much.