

4<sup>th</sup> item of the Programme – “Improvement of measures on prevention on violence and abominable crimes”

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am representative of the non-governmental organization “Open Borders”, which is active in Javakheti – region densely populated by Armenians.

We endorse the fact that Georgia signed and ratified the majority of treaties on human rights. Recent adoption by the Parliament of the Act on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination can be mentioned as the new achievement. However, in spite of this, there are still many issues in the realm of the minority rights protection in Georgia.

The Armenian community in Javakheti is almost deprived of involvement into social, political, and cultural life of Georgia. The reasons are remoteness of this region and bad command of the state language because qualified teachers of Georgian and clear methodology of teaching are absent in the region where Armenians are concentrated.

People in Javakheti vary in their perception of the Georgian state policy. Majority considers that assimilation takes place and perceives it as a threat to preservation of national identity, Armenian language and religion. The number of religious clashes increased during several last years.

Every day population of the region faces employment discrimination on linguistic or national grounds. Local population is unemployed despite the promise to create more than 1500 jobs at the Kars-Akhalkalaki-Baku railway and local hydropower stations. A few people who managed to find a job as construction workers without employment contracts faced violation of their labor rights.

We are in full agreement with all the recommendations and we thank this Forum for the opportunity to contribute to the process of developing recommendations.

- In Recommendation No. 15 we suggest to include religious organizations in the list of abettors, as they exercise significant influence over the population which may result in conflicts and violence.
- We are supporting in full Recommendation No. 18 on teaching of languages, religion and history of different groups. Teaching of languages, religion and history of different groups should be introduced throughout the system of education, including the educational establishments of minorities and multi-lingual schools in accordance with

Art. 4 of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to Minorities and Art. 12 of the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

Thank you for your attention.

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- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, Art. 4;
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, Resolution 36/55 dated 25 November 1981
- UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, Art. 5;
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Art. 27.