

Delegation of the Russian Federation

9th Session of the Forum on Minority Issues

“National Minorities in Situations of Humanitarian Crisis”

(Geneva 24-25 November 2016)

Working Session 2: Respect for the rights of minorities as a tool for prevention or reduction of humanitarian crisis consequences

Dear Mr Chairman, dear colleagues,

It is with great interest we familiarised ourselves with the report and recommendation project, prepared by the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues. Addressing this theme reflects the objective reality – recently a great number of tragic events took place on the international arena, which revealed the immeasurable problems of humanity.

This spring Pope Francis and other religious leaders met on the island of Lesbos and called the influx of countless refugees from the Middle East and Northern Africa into the European continent as a giant humanitarian crisis. Unfortunately, we have to state, that these events mostly became the results of irresponsible and unstudied intervention into internal matters of states, with the aim to forcefully replace un-cooperative governments in the region. It is absolutely correct in the report made by the Special Rapporteur, more specifically, in paras. 60-62, that point out, with what human rights problems refugees and asylum seekers are faced. Those include xenophobia, limitation on the freedom of movement and protective barriers, maintenance in camps with inhumane conditions and many more.

The priority of the attention should be given in the context of the discussed theme to the acute humanitarian situation in the South-East of Ukraine, where representatives of different people live. The September report of the monitoring mission of the OHCHR states, that Ukrainian troops continue the shelling of peaceful inhabited localities, bringing death to civilians. The social infrastructure is destroyed, people do not have enough food, water and medicine. This is also confirmed by NGOs, including Amnesty International.

The call of religious leaders not to ignore humanitarian crisis in Europe, obviously, can be applied also in Ukraine. In these situations double standards should not exist when evaluating the events taking place.

Let us remind you, that from April 2014 more than a million of Ukrainian citizens are under Russia's protection. Ukrainian refugees receive medical and psychological assistance, they are given employment positions, social benefits, and places for children in orphanages and educational institutions.

We would like to address the attention of the Special Rapporteur on the situation, when the obvious laissez-faire of the government in Kiev nationalists of different kinds and radicals are

organising a blockade of food products, transport, water and energy to the Crimean peninsula, which violates the rights of the population in the region.

We support the recommendations, made in para. 20 (paras. a, b, c), which in their core articulate, that only the coherent democratic lines in regards to minorities inside the country will create the conditions for stability and security of the society, prevent the emergence of tensions and conflicts. Unfortunately, already for 25 years the so-called parallel societies exist in Latvia and Estonia, where Russian-speakers are in a socially, economically, culturally and politically disadvantaged position comparing to the rest of the population. The maintenance of significant numbers of “non-citizens”, who cannot be easily called as stateless individuals, but they are also not full citizens of their country.

In para. 7 of the report it is absolutely fairly pointed out, that the use of native language has a big emotional meaning for communities and is a major attribute of individuality and collective identity. Unfortunately, in these countries the space for the use of native language is shrinking – in schools, media, and other spheres. In Latvia and Lithuania there are strict limitations in place on the use of minority’s mother tongue when spelling of their own names. As you understand, this is not just an additional letter to the first name and last name, this is a combination of problems which occur, for example, when crossing borders, identification of kinship, inheritance matters. And overall this kind of distortion touches the dignity of any individual.

We ask the Special Rapporteur to pay attention to these problems and consider them when finalising the report and recommendations.

Thank you for your attention.