



CLSF Latvijas Cilvēktiesību komiteja
F.I.D.H. Latvian Human Rights Committee

МФПЛ Латвийский комитет по правам человека

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To the Secretariat of the 11th UN Forum on Minority Issues

minorityforum@ohchr.org

Statement and recommendations

for Item 2

Thank you, Madam Chair. I, Aleksandrs Kuzmins, an OHCHR Minority Fellow, represent here the Latvian Human Rights Committee (FIDH). Our experience is based on the problems of over 200,000 stateless people in Latvia.

These people are excluded from decision-making, even on local level, and more than 99 % of them belong to ethnic minorities.

Moreover, newborn children continue to be born stateless in Latvia. Naturalization is going on, but it is not efficient – less than 1,000 people per year. The reduction of the number of stateless people is, first and foremost, due to mortality.

It needs to be said that the Latvian stateless people usually aren't represented at the Forum on Minority issues, or represented by Latvian citizens, like me. This is a reason to turn to our

recommendations for the UN:

- The Human Rights Council needs to create a Special Procedure on the right to nationality. It has been declared in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 70 years ago – but remains without a permanent Council mandate to support it, unlike most other UDHR articles;
- the General Assembly, upon HRC initiative, should create a Voluntary Fund for Minorities for a more effective participation of minorities on UN level, like it is done for the indigenous peoples;
- the Universal Human Rights Index should include recommendations, findings and concerns not just by UN bodies, but those by the regional human rights bodies as well;

Based on Latvia's experience, we also have

recommendations for all UN member states:

- Children must be given citizenship of the country of birth without additional procedures, if they would otherwise be stateless;
- Permanently resident stateless people should be given equal social rights and voting rights on the local level;
- Crimes committed by negligence or nonviolent crimes committed before the age of majority should not be a basis for denial of naturalization;
- Any executive or prosecutorial refusals to naturalise an applicant should have a possibility of judicial remedy;
- Naturalization exams should be culturally neutral, avoiding requirements that can undermine the ethnic and cultural dignity of those applying;
- Language requirements for naturalization of the stateless should not exceed A2 level by CEFR scale;

Finally, we also have one

recommendation for the European Union and its member states:

- To enforce the citizens' initiative „Minority Safepack”, including its provisions on the protection of stateless people.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Aleksandrs Kuzmins,
LHRC secretary-executive,
OHCHR Minority Fellow