

**Statement prepared for the Eleventh Session of the Forum on Minority Issues on
“Statelessness: a minority issue”, 29-30 November 2018, Geneva**

**Agenda Item 1: Root causes and consequences of statelessness affecting
minorities: preventing statelessness through a human rights approach**

**Ms. Sofia Melikova, OHCHR Fellow, Tsakhur National and Cultural Autonomy
(Russian Federation)**

Thank you, Madame Chair.

My name is Sofia Melikova. I am a 2018 OHCHR minority fellow representing the Tsakhur ethnic group of the Russian Federation.

So, what is the main cause of statelessness in Russia nowadays?

The answer to this question dates back to the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, when many former Soviet residents did not “automatically” exchange their Soviet passports for new ones and became stateless in the newly emerged successor states where they lived in.

Throughout the last two decades, Russia has made significant progress both in prevention and reduction of statelessness, mostly through developing nationality legislation.

According to the official data, namely the 2010 All-Russian Census, the number of people who identified themselves as stateless amounted to 178 245. If we compare this number with the results of the 2002 All-Russian Census, we see that the number of stateless people in Russia decreased by more than half (429 890 in 2002). However there is still potential for further improvements, especially relevant for certain vulnerable groups of minorities, such as Roma people.

Keeping in mind what has been said, I would like to give the following recommendations to the Russian Federation:

1. to further simplify the procedure of granting citizenship to stateless persons;
2. to provide free legal support and medical care for minority groups affected by statelessness;
3. to ratify of the 1954 UN Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, the 1961 UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

Finally, madame Chair I would like to express my gratitude to OHCHR for providing us with this unique opportunity to participate at the Minority Fellowship programme and be present here today.