

Human Rights Council

15th Session of the Forum on Minority Issues

"Review. Rethink. Reform. 30th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Minority Rights"
Geneva, 1 December 2022

**Intervention of Elizabete Krivcova, Citizens advice institute "Conscentia", Latvia
under the 3rd item of the agenda: Rethink: Minority rights defenders and their role in
promoting principles of the Declaration**

As a human rights defender and the former OHCHR fellow I represent interests of Russian speaking community in Latvia.

I share the opinion of the special rapporteur about regress in minority right protection worldwide, including my country. For last 20 year we experienced reducing of space for minority language and culture in Latvia. But in last 5 year the shrinking of minority rights became more rapid. Elimination of school education in minority language, withdrawal of teaching of minority language from curricula, demolition of monuments important for minorities, slowing progress in elimination of statelessness and excluding minorities from decision making.

After the war that Russia started against Ukraine, we are witnessing significant regress in minority rights protection in many neighbors countries. Today it is near to impossible to address rights of Russian speaking minority in Latvia. Persons engaged in promoting and defending national minority rights suffer insecurity because of those activities, faces exclusion and hostility. Reports about violations of minorities rights or asylum seekers rights are deemed as fake news and subversive activities. Administrative fines for public statements and abuse of criminal proceedings are becoming our reality.

As human rights defenders we cannot convince the majority of society and politician about existing international standards in field of minority rights. We are witnessing mainstreaming of neglecting minority rights. Even national representatives of UNESCO in Latvia share its support for full elimination of general education in minority language and withdrawal of minority language from school curricula.

I am convinced that without new impulses and instruments we will not achieve any progress in protecting minority rights. Therefore I share full support for the following recommendations

- to initiate a study on how to strengthen the protection of minority rights;
- to prepare a new legally binding and comprehensive international treaty for protection of minority rights and minority representatives shall participate by elaborating of such treaty
- to create a voluntary fund on minority-related activities at the United Nations