

Honorable Chairman of the United Nations Forum
on Minority Issues!

Dear participants of the Forum!

●I am a chairperson of a non-governmental organization called “Association for Support of Schools with Russian Language of Instruction in Latvia”, which in Latvia is also known by its short abbreviation “LASHOR”.

Our goal is to preserve and develop the GENERAL school education in the language of a Russian-speaking linguistic minority in the Republic of Latvia.

I understand that the word Russian has become notorious over the last nine months. About that, a little bit later.

●May I remind the Forum about my country Latvia? It is a Member of the European Union, one of the smallest countries of Europe. It is located on the Baltic seashore and borders on Estonia, Lithuania, Belarus and Russia.

The Republic of Latvia is a result of a national self-determination of a Latvian ethnic group. Latvian is the only official language. Although an ethnic composition of the population is diverse, the whole of the country falls into two groups – people, who speak Latvian at home

(61,3% of residents) and those, who speak Russian at home (37,7%). About one per cent of the population speak Belarusian, Ukrainian, Polish, Lithuanian and other languages. So, 38,7% of Latvian residents speak the languages of national minorities at home. Parents have the right to demand that from their taxes the state provides education in the language, in which they raise their children.

●I am well aware that today around the world the word ‘Russian’ is associated not with the Russian minority in Latvia, but with the Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. This monstrous association with the invasion dramatically complicates the protection of the rights of the Russian-speaking minority in the Baltic States, and in Latvia in particular.

I believe that what the current leadership has done to the Russian Federation is a catastrophe, the scope of which is not yet comprehended neither in Russia itself, nor abroad. It dealt a fatal blow to the reputation of the Russians and other Soviet people, deserved by sacrifice of their grandparents, who together with British, American

and French allies defeated German National Socialism seventy-seven years ago.

●Now, as any appeal for support from the Russian Federation would even more aggravate the protection of Russian-speakers rights in Latvia, we can apply only to the European Union and the United Nations.

In the meantime, we witness that conservative and nationalistic politicians in Latvia strive to take use of this situation and of an apathy that has spread among Russians in Latvia after the invasion began.

The Minister of Education openly has stated that her proposal is important right now, cynically hoping that the Russian-speaking community in Latvia can be demoralised and unable to show effective resistance to the final elimination of the comprehensive education in the Russian language.

It is by the decision of the government and the parliament of Latvia that the GENERAL education, which comprises the studies of subjects in the Russian language, will be completely terminated and substituted by the INTEREST-related education. This kind of education in contrast with the general

education provides only language training and teaching of the history of minority culture.

Since the general education is compulsory in Latvia, the Russian-speaking children, after the year 2025, should be instructed only in the official language at the general education school, but after the classes attend interest-related education in addition, if they can and their parents want.

●What is important to indicate is that the termination of education in the Russian language will be effected both in public schools and in private schools, thus equating public schools to private ones, which radically reduces the autonomy of the private schools.

The process of adoption of new legislation has not been discussed with the parents' community. No real opportunities were provided for involvement of them. However, what was demonstrated as such an opportunity, was defiantly formal and did not suppose any feedback on the part of the state, but rather "let off the steam".

●Moreover, here is the quote from the annotation to the Education Law that paves the Latvianisation of education: "The retreat of people belonging to different

identities to each in their area of identity threatens the likelihood of the democratic discourse and common action in a single society.” (End of quote)

So, we conclude that the right of persons, belonging to minorities, to maintain their identity, which the OSCE recognised as unquestionable, is viewed by the State of Latvia as a threat to an ultimately single integrated society. Therefore, the attack on the education rights of Russian-speakers in Latvia limits their rights to preserve and develop their identity, puts it under threat and pushes Russian-speakers into assimilation.

That is OUTRAGEOUS! We protest.