

PRESENTATION
Representative of the Russian Federation
at the 15th session of the UNHRC Forum on Minority Issues
concerning point 4 “Open dialogue: urgent situations facing minorities”

2 December 2022

Mr Chairman,

Traditionally, the Russian Federation has paid great attention to the promotion and protection of the rights of national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities who today, most unfortunately, are increasingly being subjected to discrimination, racism, xenophobia and inequality.

In this context, the situation of the Russian-speaking minority in the Baltic States is unprecedented. Unfortunately, we have to admit that violations of the rights of national minorities, while unacceptable in some EU member states, are justified in others.

One of these problems is the so-called institution of non-citizenship, which has existed in Latvia and Estonia for more than 27 years now. This “special legal status” is in fact a stain on the civil, political, economic and cultural rights of a sizeable part of the population of these countries.

As a result, for almost three decades in the Baltic States, “Russian” and other national minority schools continue to be closed, teachers are sacked because of their lack of proper knowledge of the state language, and bilingual schools are being liquidated. This does not take account of the opinions of teachers, students or parents, or demographic indicators in areas where a significant number of people, if not the majority, speak the native language.

Currently, the Seimas of Latvia, a country whose population consists of more than 30 percent ethnic Russians, is considering another discriminatory bill “Concerning the limitation of bilingualism”. This legislative act, if adopted, will completely prohibit the use of the Russian language both at work and in other areas

of public life. We remember that teaching in Russian has previously been eliminated in all Latvian educational institutions, including pre-schools. Such absurd initiatives, which affect the interests of almost half of the population of Latvia and run counter to numerous recommendations from relevant international structures, have long since been a shameful practice.

Nationalist circles in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia have for many years been propagating a distorted interpretation of the historical events of the 20th century, aimed at maintaining the Russophobic course being pursued by their states. An integral part of their policy was the bestowing of hero status on Nazi collaborators, which led to the current wave of desecration of graves and the demolition of monuments to Soviet soldiers, including Russians and Latvians who defeated Nazism. The West's further condoning of these disgusting phenomena in the Baltic countries is a sure trigger for racial hostility, intolerance and xenophobia, and a means of awakening the repression and oppression of Russians.

We consider this attitude to be unacceptable, and anticipate that the special rapporteur will devote a separate study to this issue.

Thank you for your attention.