

International Human Rights Internship Program

Thank you, Madame Chair. My name is Stefan, I am a fellow of the Minority Fellowship Program. I come from the Republic of Moldova and belong to the Bulgarian national minority, which makes up 1.6% of the country's population. Most of our community resides in Taraclia district, a second-level administrative unit in southern Moldova. Taraclia counts about 35,000 inhabitants, of whom 65% are ethnic Bulgarians. It is the only district in Moldova out of 30, where a national minority forms the majority. In 2023, the Moldovan government adopted a strategy affirmed by the public administration proposing to reduce the number of districts from 30 to 5. Under this plan, Taraclia would be abolished and merged into a larger southern region. The new region would exceed 150,000 people and Bulgarians would make up only 10% instead of the 65% in Taraclia. This reform is going to be implemented during the next year, so we need fast actions. This reform is not only removing the Bulgarian district and violates the rights of minorities, but also undermines trust and social cohesion among ethnic groups. Depriving the Bulgarian national minority of their political, educational, and cultural center will only create new barriers to peaceful coexistence. Dear Special Rapporteur, last year during my speech at the 17th session, I asked you to take a closer look at the administrative reform in Moldova and its potential risks for minority rights. This year, I would ask you to support us with action and to call the Moldovan government to respect and preserve the rights of national minorities during the implementation of administrative reform. Thank you.