



GEORGIA

Statement by Mr. Giorgi Tumasyan

Georgia's Youth Delegate to the United Nations

10th session of the United Nations Forum on Minority Issues

Item 2: Inclusive education to empower minority youth

Geneva, 30 November 2017

Mister Chair, distinguished delegates,

It is my honour to address the 10th session of the United Nations Forum on Minority Issues as Georgia's first Youth Delegate to the United Nations with an ethnic minority background. At the outset, I would like to thank the United Nations and the Government of Georgia for their continuous efforts to empower minorities, including minority youth.

A comprehensive solution to empower minorities and not leave them behind the Sustainable Development Agenda is strategic investments in the education of the minority youth, who represent a building block for more integrated, equal and inclusive societies.

Georgia is a multi-ethnic country, where every single citizen regardless of their ethnic background is a source of strength to our country, so they are at the centre of the strategy of the Government of Georgia. Diversity represents a valuable asset of Georgia and a resource for the democratic and stable development of the country.¹ Alongside with the dominant ethnic group - Georgians - representatives of different ethnic groups have played a significant role in the country's development throughout various stages of history.²

Improving access to quality education by providing high quality pre-school, general, vocational and higher education as well as the acquisition of increasing state language knowledge among minority

¹ The Government of Georgia, "State Strategy of Georgia for Civic Equality and Integration and Action Plan for 2015-2020", The Vision for Civic Equality and Integration Policy, August 2015, (http://smr.gov.ge/Uploads/esen_55b90432.pdf)

² The Government of Georgia, "State Strategy of Georgia for Civic Equality and Integration and Action Plan for 2015-2020", Introduction, August 2015, (http://smr.gov.ge/Uploads/esen_55b90432.pdf)

youth are priority objectives for Georgia and the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration and Action Plan for 2015 - 2020 envisages a number of measures to fulfil these objectives.³

Since 2010, representatives of the ethnic minorities have an opportunity to receive higher education according to the preferential policy, also referred “Program 1+4” which includes an exam in general skills in Abkhazian, Ossetian, Armenian and Azeri languages, have made a significant contribution to improving access to higher education for minorities, as the number of such students has increased significantly and reached more than sixty hundred. Respectively, the policy will be continued.⁴

Despite significant efforts and investments, the quality of education remains a challenge in the rural areas, including non-Georgian language schools, which are in need of improving the quality of textbooks and further professional enhancing of teacher’s qualifications.⁵ It is essential to ensure that teachers and students know the official state language, but it is also equally important to preserve native languages. To go further toward an inclusive and diverse society, we need textbooks that adequately reflect the diversity of Georgia. ⁶

In conclusion, I would like to once again stress my Government’s commitment to ensure the high-quality education at all levels for every citizen of the diverse society of Georgia. We are mindful that it is a complex task and stand ready to move forward.

Thank you for your attention.

³ “State Strategy of Georgia for Civic Equality and Integration and Action Plan for 2015-2020”, Improving access to quality education and increasing state language knowledge, August 2015, (http://smr.gov.ge/Uploads/esen_55b90432.pdf)

⁴ “State Strategy of Georgia for Civic Equality and Integration and Action Plan for 2015-2020”, Increasing access to higher education August 2015, (http://smr.gov.ge/Uploads/esen_55b90432.pdf)

⁵ “State Strategy of Georgia for Civic Equality and Integration and Action Plan for 2015-2020”, Improving access to quality education and increasing state language knowledge, August 2015, (http://smr.gov.ge/Uploads/esen_55b90432.pdf)

⁶ “State Strategy of Georgia for Civic Equality and Integration and Action Plan for 2015-2020”, Increasing access to basic quality education both in state and native languages, August 2015, (http://smr.gov.ge/Uploads/esen_55b90432.pdf)