

HDIM Working Session 8: National minorities

Mr. Moderator,

I would like to use my right of reply in response to the statement of Russian delegation provided with their interpretation concerning the process of adoption of the Law on National Minorities.

Following the provisions of the Constitution and of national and international legislation, Lithuania ensures equal political, economic, social and cultural rights and freedoms for persons belonging to national minorities, recognizes national identity and cultural continuity and fosters national awareness and its self-expression. Lithuania provides favorable conditions for developing the self-awareness and culture of national minorities. National minorities in Lithuania are ensured the right and freedom to set up cultural NGOs.

As concerns specifically the Law on National Minorities, the Ministry of Culture has prepared a draft of a new Law on National Minorities, which is in conjunction with the provision laid down in The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Communities. Consultations took place with The Council of National Communities while preparing the project. A non-formal consultative group of representatives from national minorities and the Council of National Communities was formed, which submitted proposals to the Ministry of the Culture. The proposals were discussed and were taken into consideration while preparing the draft Law. The draft Law on National minorities prepared by the Government transposes norms of Council of Europe Framework convention on national minorities in to national law and foresees following rights of persons belonging to national minorities: the right to use the minority language in relation with administrative authorities and right to display local names, street names and other topographical indications in areas where national minorities consist at least 25 percent of population; the right to religion, association, education in minority language and etc. The draft Law includes broad notion of ‘national minority’ which applies not only to citizens but to persons permanently

living in Lithuania. The draft Law currently is included in the agenda of the autumn session of the Parliament.

I thank you, Mr. Moderator.