

**Statement of the Delegation of Ukraine
at the Working Session 5 “Ensuring equal enjoyment of rights and equal
participation in political and public life” of
2017 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**

Mr. Moderator,

Ukraine aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and addressing today the issue of equal participation of under-represented groups in my national capacity I would like to attract attention of the HDIM participants to the rights of the national minorities of Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars in the occupied Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

From day one of the illegal occupation Russia has been transforming the Crimean peninsula into the human rights “exclusion zone” marked by injustice, terror and repression, by attempts to erase the national identity of the Ukrainians and of the indigenous people of the peninsula — the Crimean Tatars, by cruel silencing of any dissenting voices.

While flagrantly breaching all ten principles of the Helsinki Final Act, the Russian Federation has systematically violated the OSCE commitments on promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, strengthening instead the oppression of the population under its occupation.

The violations have been registered and documented by the United Nations and the OSCE ODIHR/HCNM missions, civil society organizations and human rights defenders.

In the course of today’s discussion we would like to draw the attention to some of them.

To be Crimean Tatar or Ukrainian dissent over Russia’s illegal actions is a crime in Crimea. Deputy Chairman of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis Akhtem Chiygoz after being behind bars for two years has been recently convicted by the occupation court to 8 years of imprisonment. Another Deputy Chairman of Mejlis Ilmi Umerov is criminally persecuted. The leader of the Crimean Tatar people Mustafa Dzhemilev and Chairman of the Mejlis Refat Chubarov have been banned entry to their native land.

Just today in the morning after the search in his house in Nizhnehirsk was reportedly taken somewhere by people in masks another Crimean Tatar activist Renat Paralamov and his whereabouts are unknown for his family and lawyer.

The Mejlis – a traditional representative body of the Crimean Tatar people – was labeled by the Russian occupation authorities “an extremist organization” and banned.

Russia has not implemented the provisional measures concerning “refrain from maintaining or imposing limitations on the ability of the Crimean Tatar community to converse its representative institutions, including the Mejlis” adopted by the International Court of Justice’s Order in the case concerning Application of the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing

of Terrorism and of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Ukraine v. Russian Federation).

The people in Crimea are denied the right to freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of religion. The occupation authorities banned the traditional ceremonies in connection with anniversaries of the deportation of the Crimean Tatar people, peaceful assembly on the Crimean Tatar Flag Day, annual rally on the International Day of Human Rights and other events. A demonstration of the Ukrainian flag or laying flowers to the Ukrainian monuments can easily become the reason for a criminal or administrative charge. That was the case for Kurseit Abdullayev, Leonid Kuzmin and Olexander Kravchenko who were detained and found guilty for displaying the Ukrainian flag and inscriptions "Crimea is Ukraine" which the so-called "court" considered to be symbols of extremist organizations. Or the recent case of Crimean farmer Volodymyr Balukh who was thrown in jail last December on fabricated charges just for hoisting the Ukrainian flag at his private house. V.Balukh joined a long list of Ukrainian citizens who are political prisoners in Russia and in the Russia-occupied territory of Ukraine.

Distinguished participants,

Against the backdrop of glaring and systematic human rights violations in the illegally occupied Crimean peninsula, on 19 December 2016 the UN General Assembly adopted a Resolution 71/205 "Situation of human rights in Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)". In particular, the General Assembly, condemning Russia's occupation of a part of Ukraine's territory and not recognizing the attempted annexation, called on the Russian Federation "to take all measures necessary to bring an immediate end to all abuses against residents of Crimea, in particular reported discriminatory measures and practices, arbitrary detentions, torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment, and to revoke all discriminatory legislation." It also urged Russia to "immediately release Ukrainian citizens who were unlawfully detained and judged without regard for elementary standards of justice, as well as those transferred across internationally recognized borders from Crimea to the Russian Federation". The Resolution refers to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, which, inter alia, provide for the humane treatment of the population, living in the occupied territory, and protect its rights under international humanitarian law.

In the absence of such access, we call on the OSCE Chairmanship and the OSCE Institutions – HCNM, ODIHR and RFoM - to use all assets at their disposal for distant monitoring, documentation and reaction to human rights situation in the illegally occupied Crimea.

We urge Russia, as an occupying power, to take responsibility for stopping all human rights violations on the peninsula and to facilitate free and unconditional access of the international monitors to Crimea.

We urge Russia to reverse the illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol which are an integral part of the sovereign territory of Ukraine.

I thank you.