

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 955th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

6 June 2013

On the rights of national minorities in Estonia to education

Mr. Chairperson,

At the risk of repeating myself, I should like to point out that safeguarding the rights of national minorities and, in particular, the successful resolution of problems connected with their integration helps directly to neutralize domestic threats and to ensure stability and security in the OSCE area. The Organization has elaborated a large set of commitments in this regard to establish favourable conditions for teaching in the native language of the minorities concerned.

Unfortunately, the Estonian authorities continue to restrict the educational possibilities in the national minorities' native language – now not only in the public but also in the private sector.

In May this year the Ministry of Education and Science proposed to withdraw the licence of the Tallinn Institute of Economics and Management (ECOMEN), the only private higher educational institution in the country offering tuition in Russian.

In the 20 years of its existence, the institution has undergone repeated inspections. It should be pointed out that the inspections carried out by the Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency in October 2012 and the independent company Bureau Veritas in April this year produced positive conclusions.

In spite of this, the Minister for Education has already publicly recommended to ECOMEN students that they choose other universities to continue their studies. At the same time, experts acknowledge that the irregularities identified during the last inspection and cited as the reason for the decision to withdraw the licence are of a technical nature and easy to put right.

The decision to close the only institution of higher education with instruction in the language of the national minority deprives Russian-speaking inhabitants of Estonia of the possibility of pursuing higher education in their native language. This goes against recommendations by international organizations in this regard, in particular the

United Nations Economic and Social Council (2002 and 2011), the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (2006 and 2010) and the CSCE Copenhagen Document of 1990 (Article 34).

We urge the OSCE's specialized institutions, first and foremost the High Commissioner on National Minorities, to turn their attention to this matter. We hope that the Estonian authorities will finally heed the recommendations of international institutions and pay attention to the interests of the Russian-speaking minority.