

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AT THE
OSCE SUPPLEMENTARY HUMAN DIMENSION MEETING ON
NATIONAL MINORITIES, BRIDGE BUILDING AND INTEGRATION**

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**Working session II: Promoting the bridge building role of
national minority issues across various policy areas**

Mr. Moderator,
Distinguished experts,

Ensuring the rights of national minorities is very important for preserving the stability and security of society. The Ljubljana Guidelines have once again reminded us of the major role played by education, language, effective participation and access to justice on the part of national minorities for social integration.

In the light of the concerns expressed by the Ukrainian delegation, we would point out that the principle of integration while maintaining diversity is nothing new for the Russian Federation. This is our traditional approach to resolving issues regarding national minorities. Russia remains a multinational country, with some 200 nationalities.

Furthermore, the Russian Federation is one of the few States to have undertaken, specifically under the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, to protect all of the peoples and ethnic groups living on its territory.

We pay considerable attention to education in native languages, because educational institutions for minorities are not only institutions of learning and socialization but also help in the consolidation and integration of any multinational society.

This is why we are especially concerned at the dismantling of the education system for the Russian-speaking minority in a number of countries over the past 20 years since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Under the banner of optimizing the educational process and school reform, a very painful process, mainly affecting national minorities, is taking place involving the curtailment of minority language education.

It is true that the Ljubljana Guidelines focus particularly on the preservation of minority languages in the process of integration. For that reason, the existence in a number of States of a "punitive" language policy, which takes the form of language inspectorates and

finances for the use of minority languages and insufficient mastery of the State language, contravenes not only the aforementioned recommendations but also international legal standards in this area.

One of the rights of national minorities is the use of their native language in topographical names, but they are frequently deprived of this right. In particular, when ratifying the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Latvia even added a special proviso disaffirming the relevant provisions of the Convention providing national minorities with the right to use their native language in topographical names in places with a large minority population.

The spelling of first names and surnames of members of national minorities in accordance with the grammar rules of their native language is a particular problem in Latvia and Lithuania. Even the Court of Justice of the European Union, which examined this question, made the following reservation: "If the refusal to amend the spelling of the names is liable to cause serious administrative, professional or personal inconvenience, this may constitute an undue restriction on the rights and freedoms of an EU citizen".

The Ljubljana Guidelines quite rightly focus on the important role of the media in the process of integration. It is clear that the media can play both a positive role, by strengthening intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding, and a negative one, by formulating negative stereotypes and prejudices. The ban on the broadcasting of Russian-language media and the refusal by local authorities in a number of European countries to register Russian media under the imaginary pretext that they pose an external information threat is unlikely to have a positive impact on intercultural dialogue.

The fact that in a number of countries the language of national minorities, teaching in their native language, the media and even the representatives of national minorities themselves are regarded as a threat to national security is counter-productive not only for domestic policy and mutual relations among the communities living in that State but also for inter-State co-operation.

At the present time, given the risks posed by migration and the exacerbation of old problems in the sphere of inter-ethnic relations, it is evident that some States are unable or unwilling to find effective answers to key problems in this area.

In order that recommendations can be applied in practice, we believe that the OSCE specialist structures, first and foremost the future High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, should pay greater attention to the fulfilment by participating States of their international commitments.

Thank you for your attention.