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**Permanent Mission of Ukraine**  
to the International  
Organizations in Vienna

## **Statement in response to the Report of H.E. Lamberto Zannier, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities**

As delivered by Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk,  
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,  
to the 1229th meeting of the Permanent Council,  
23 May 2019

### **Mr. Chairperson,**

The delegation of Ukraine warmly welcomes H.E. Ambassador Lamberto Zannier, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for the presented report.

We wish to reiterate our strong support for the mandate and activities of the High Commissioner on National Minorities.

The Government of Ukraine values the close cooperation with the High Commissioner and his engagement in assisting Ukraine. In this regard we welcome the last week's visit of the HCNM to Kyiv, when many substantive meetings were held, including with the Ukrainian Foreign Minister P.Klimkin.

In connection with the recent adoption of the Law of Ukraine "On ensuring the functioning of Ukrainian as the State language", we note positive evaluation by the HCNM of steps taken by Ukraine aimed at promoting "the knowledge of the State language as a key tool to facilitate integration and social cohesion". We also take note of respective views of HCNM on further steps.

The said law implements the Constitutional provisions, defines the status of the Ukrainian language as the State language and establishes the obligation of the State to ensure comprehensive development and functioning of the Ukrainian language. The adopted Law also extends the transition period for the implementation of Article 7 of the Law of Ukraine "On education" until 2023. This was a key recommendation both from the HCNM and Venice Commission.

The authorities of Ukraine will further continue to aim at the implementation of the Venice Commission recommendations of December 2017. At the same time, we encourage the High Commissioner to pay a closer attention to the attempts or policies of obstruction or placing obstacles to pursuit of the legitimate goals of the Ukrainian authorities to enhance integration and cohesion of the society across the country. We witness such attempts on the ground and they also echo in some statements in this hall. Ukraine is determined to provide for full enjoyment of rights and realization of potential of all citizens of Ukraine regardless of their ethnic origin, which is also guaranteed by the law.

**Dear High Commissioner,**

In the last week Ukraine commemorates the victims of the violent deportation of the Crimean Tatar people from their native Crimean soil by the totalitarian Stalin's regime in 1944. The Chairman of the Mejlis of Crimean Tatar People R.Chubarov briefed you on this occasion when meeting you in Kyiv on 15 May.

The Crimean Tatars are now facing the repetition of the political repressions and persecutions comparable to the tragedy caused by the Stalinist deportation.

On 28 March we witnessed the launch of a new wave of persecutions against the Crimean Tatars. The houses of dozens of them were searched in the city of Simferopol and nearby districts. Over twenty Crimean Tatars were detained under the trumped-up charges of alleged belonging to Hizb ut-Tahrir, an organisation that is legal in Ukraine, but banned by the Russian occupation authorities. Two days ago 24 of them were recognized by Russian human rights centre "Memorial" to be political prisoners.

The Russian occupation authorities continue to maintain the ban on the Mejlis, in violation of the ruling by the International Court of Justice of 19 April 2017 which ordered the Russian Federation to "refrain from maintaining or imposing limitations on the ability of the Crimean Tatar community to conserve its representative institutions, including the Mejlis".

The Russian Federation was also ordered by the Court to "ensure the availability of education in the Ukrainian language" in the Crimean peninsula. This order is entirely ignored. The instruction in the Ukrainian language is disappearing due to actions of occupation administration. Figures speak themselves: in the years of Russia's illegal occupation the number of students undergoing instruction in Ukrainian language has dropped dramatically by 35 times from 2013, the number of Ukrainian schools decreased by 7 times, and the number of Ukrainian classes - by 31 times. Ukrainian as a language of instruction has been fully removed from university-level education.

We encourage the HCNM and the ODIHR to use all assets at their disposal to closely monitor and react to the situation, in particular regarding the

implementation of the recommendations contained in the 2015 HRAM Report on Crimea.

Eradication of Ukrainian national identity by Russian occupation administration is not restricted to Crimea, but is also actively perpetrated in Russia-occupied parts of Donbass.

**Dear High Commissioner,**

In your today's report you alluded to the principles and spirit of the HCNM Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations which regrettably "are not always taken into account" by participating States.

However, in light of the recent Kremlin's decision on expedited issuance of Russia's passports to the Ukrainian citizens in the occupied parts of Donbas we deem necessary to be clear and precise: the illegal passportization is a new dimension of creeping annexation by Russia of Ukraine's territory. It is yet another blatant violation of the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political unity of Ukraine, a gross interference into internal affairs of my country. It is yet another blatant breach by Russia of founding OSCE principles. We encourage the HCNM to be more vocal when such gross violations take place.

**Dear High Commissioner,**

Against the backdrop of numerous international reports and observations on violations of international standards and obligations affecting national minorities and indigenous peoples in Russia we regret that your report did not address the national minorities' rights in the Russian Federation.

In this connection I remind that with over 2 mln. Ukrainian minority in Russia, according to official statistics, there is not a single school with the full curriculum of instruction in the Ukrainian language. In 2017 a single Library of Ukrainian Literature in Russia, which had functioned in Moscow, was liquidated. The director of the library was criminally persecuted on trumped-up charges.

On 14 February 2019 the Ukrainian delegation brought to the attention of the Permanent Council the findings of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, whose Opinion was published on 15 January 2019.

Let me offer one quotation from the opinion of the Advisory Committee: "Since the annexation of Crimea and conflict in eastern Ukraine, Russian government-controlled media are fuelling a patriotic mobilisation of society against Ukraine. The Advisory Committee is concerned that this discourse risks side-lining not only persons belonging to the Ukrainian national minority but also anyone not aligning with the majority, including persons belonging to other national minority groups".

Highlighting the systematic hardships affecting the Ukrainian national community in Russia, it is appropriate to also draw attention to other specific findings. In particular, “cultural organisations of the Ukrainian national minority told the Advisory Committee that they met obstructions when trying to operate... They reported difficulties in registering organisations and receiving authorisation for the organisation of Ukrainian cultural events. The Advisory Committee is deeply concerned about reported repression of leaders of existing organisations in several regions. Intimidatory practices have been reported to the Advisory Committee based on a wide interpretation of the anti-extremism. Publishing information about the great famine in Ukraine during the Stalin era (“holodomor”), for instance, would reportedly be considered extremist activity.”

**Dear High Commissioner,**

In view of your plans to visit Russia in July this year, we encourage you not to limit yourself with the formal meetings in Moscow, but insist with the Russian authorities on visiting different regions in the country for direct contacts with minorities on the ground, which are effected by targeted policies of forced russification.

We call upon the Russian authorities to co-operate fully with the OSCE HCNM and take immediate measures to reverse the rapid degradation of the situation of national minorities in Russia.

Finally, we thank the High Commissioner for his report and engagement. We look forward to continuing our close co-operation.

**Thank you, Mr.Chairman.**