

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY  
THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AT THE  
THIRD OSCE SUPPLEMENTARY HUMAN DIMENSION MEETING  
ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND EDUCATION: PROMOTING HUMAN  
RIGHTS, PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AND SECURITY IN THE  
OSCE REGION THROUGH EDUCATION**

9 October 2018

**Session III: Effective Enjoyment of the Right to Education as a Tool to  
Foster Peace and Security**

Mr. Chairperson,  
Distinguished colleagues,

As citizens of a multi-ethnic and multifaith State, Russians view the absence of inter-ethnic and interfaith discord as the foundation of the peace, security and all-round development of Russian society today. We believe that, along with carrying out a balanced social and economic policy, investment in “human capital” and inclusive education – without discrimination or “exceptions” for particular groups or individuals – has paramount importance for maintaining social peace and ensuring the security of European countries.

It is our conviction that there can be no talk of human rights education today if young people are deprived of the opportunity to receive education in and speak their native language. For Russians this is not an issue because our country has put in place conditions for the harmonious development of all ethnic groups, preserving their culture and languages and supporting ethnocultural youth organizations.

One could say that young people first gain knowledge about basic human rights, the uniqueness of the individual, and experience in relations between the individual and the State through studying their native language and literature. The works of the world-famous classics of Russian literature – Pushkin, Tolstoy, Gogol, Dostoyevsky and Chekhov – offer the first lessons on humaneness, mercy, tolerance and respect for every human being.

In this context, we consider unacceptable attempts by the governments of a number of OSCE participating States to artificially restrict the role of the Russian language and the languages of national minorities in public and State life. A real, rather than formal, understanding of human rights involves not ideological “cleansing” of the post-Soviet space and “brainwashing” young people in a spirit of Russophobia, Islamophobia and

anti-Semitism, but creating conditions for the harmonious interaction of the different cultures that make up Europe's common heritage, present and future.

We are forced once again to recall the policy of the Latvian Government which will oblige national minority schools to dispense education in the State language, Latvian. In the view of many experts, this policy pursues the goal of forcibly assimilating Russian speakers, and creating an ethnocratic State, which risks fuelling inter-ethnic tension in what is for now still a multi-ethnic State. Squeezing Russian out of public and political life would be tantamount to "linguistic genocide", given that it is the native language for a third of Latvia's population. What is happening is the destruction of the entire system of teaching in national minority education establishments. Here, Latvia is violating not only its international obligations (under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention against Discrimination in Education), but also the provisions of its own Constitution, which states that "persons belonging to ethnic minorities have the right to preserve and develop their language and their ethnic and cultural identity."

We should also remember that abandoning education in the languages of national minorities could lower education levels and create closed education systems in schools, whose graduates would have difficulty adapting to the demands of the modern global labour market. This probably explains why, following this perverted logic, the Estonian Government is examining a draft law on a tenfold increase in fines on legal entities whose staff have a poor command of the Estonian language.

In this context, we believe that young people's education levels and integration into the social and economic life of Latvian and Estonian society is a pan-European issue. The actions of the Latvian and Estonian Governments violate not only international agreements, but also the principles of freedom and democracy that these governments pledged to uphold when they joined the European Union. We think that the emergence in a number of EU countries of a category of "non-citizens", who are deliberately deprived of their basic civil and political rights, as well as their right to education in their native language, could eventually become a serious destabilizing factor for the region's social and political situation.

We note with regret that the discriminatory amendments to the Ukrainian Law on Education will also lead to outrageous mass violations of the rights of Ukraine's Russian-speaking population. As in the Latvian case, this OSCE participating State is ignoring not only its international commitments but also the provisions of its own Constitution. The Russian language is the language of daily use for an overwhelming majority of Ukrainians, including Ukrainian diplomats, and yet it is subjected to a double discrimination: it is in a disadvantaged position both in relation to the State language and in relation to the languages of EU Member States, for which the new law makes exceptions.

We believe that the deliberate imposition of Ukrainian-language education in schools, which is to be completed by 2020, will seriously damage Ukraine's education system and the level of education of its people. We cannot rule out that attempts to squeeze out the Russian language will only further aggravate the political situation in the country and radicalize young people.

Furthermore, as we learnt just before this meeting, despite the recommendations of the Council of Europe's Venice Commission, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine passed in the

first reading a law on total Ukrainization of not just education but also the media, culture, health care, court proceedings and even everyday services. This law will establish a State body to oversee “the purity of the Ukrainian linguistic space” and a “commissioner for the protection of the Ukrainian language”. It also introduces strict penalties for “neglecting” the Ukrainian language, including large fines, administrative arrest for up to six months, and also punitive measures of up to three years’ imprisonment.

We believe that human rights education, like all other kinds of education, involves an ideological influence on the hearts and minds of the learners. Ultimately, human rights are one of the leading and near-universal humanistic ideologies. But, as experience shows, including in Ukraine, Latvia and Estonia, under the pretext of “freedom of speech”, human rights rhetoric is widely used to preach intolerance, racism, neo-Nazism, and to fan inter-ethnic and interfaith discord.

Given the negative trends in protecting the linguistic and educational rights of national minorities and the problems in this area that we see in a number of participating States, the time is ripe to reaffirm these rights and put them back on the agenda.

In this respect, we call on the delegations of the participating States, the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities to give a clear assessment of the aforementioned actions by the Ukrainian, Estonian and Latvian Governments and to work closely on rectifying the current situation with national minority rights in this region.