



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

**Statement by the Delegation of Ukraine
in response to the Current issue raised by the Delegation of Hungary**

As for delivery by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1295th meeting of the Permanent Council,
10 December 2020

Mr. Chairperson,

We took note of the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Hungary. Its substance will be conveyed to the capital. Meanwhile, as a matter of initial comments regarding the issues raised in the statement by the Permanent Representative of Hungary I wish to state the following.

Ukraine remains committed to protecting and promoting the rights of all national minorities in line with the OSCE commitments and international standards. The establishment of an effective system of promotion and protection of rights of all national minorities, as well as support and development of tolerant inter-ethnic relations are among key priorities of the democratic reform process undertaken by the Ukrainian Government. The efforts of the Ukraine are also aimed, including through the decentralization reform, at establishing an efficient mechanism for participation of representatives of national minorities in decision-making by both state and local government. Now these reforms start to give meaningful results to the Ukrainian society.

Despite either these efforts and efforts by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine as well as personal engagement of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine to agree with the Hungarian Side upon a constructive track in bilateral relations which are based on mutual respect and adherence to the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs, the Ukrainian side faces a new wave of alarming manipulations and groundless accusations from Budapest. We call the Hungarian side to avoid steps and statements that do not reflect reality and establish destructive emotional tension and mistrust in Ukrainian-Hungarian relations.

Mr. Chairperson,

Regarding the substance of the issues raised by Hungary, namely the investigative actions by Ukrainian law-enforcement. Here I wish to underline that investigative proceedings in Zakarpattia region are not directed against the Hungarian community, as Hungary claims.

The Security Service of Ukraine conducts an investigation on particular individuals and collects possible evidence of fraud and misuse of funds in violation of the laws of Ukraine.

It is to our regrets that Hungarian officials are trying to present the investigation as an attempt of the Ukrainian Government to intimidate the

Hungarian minority. These allegations are groundless. The Ukrainian law-enforcement agencies are investigating the activity of individual citizens of Ukraine, not the Hungarian community, strictly within their competences and mandates.

Every Ukrainian citizen is equal before the law regardless of their nationality and ethnic origin. It is a principle of individual and not collective responsibility that reigns in Ukraine. Every Ukrainian citizen has the right and judicial possibility to defend oneself in the court.

Mr. Chairperson,

We do respect Hungary as our neighbor and highly appreciate tangible support of Hungary under the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular in Zakarpattia region. At the same time, on many occasions, the Ukrainian side drew attention of Budapest and recipients of the Hungarian financial assistance in Zakarpattia that funds should be provided in full transparency and accountability in order to be efficient and serve the needs they are allocated for. However, the reaction received so far from the Hungarian side lacks these criteria.

We fully share and follow the perspective expressed in the HCNM Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations. In this regard the spirit and letter of the Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations stipulates that States should refrain from support and financing of political parties and movements abroad with an ethnic or religious character, as this has an impact on the domestic political processes and often contributes to excessive politicization of minority issues to the detriment of societal integration and good inter-State relations.

Unfortunately, it looks like our Hungarian colleagues do not share this approach. Such attitude was vividly demonstrated during the electoral campaign and voting day at the local election on 25 October this year.

On the eve of the local election in Ukraine, as well as on the polling day the Hungarian officials publicly agitated in favor of one political party of Ukraine - the Society of Hungarian Culture of Zakarpattia/Party of Hungarians in Ukraine.

Such actions of Hungarian officials contradicted to the Article 57 of the Electoral Code of Ukraine, which prohibits foreigners from taking part in the election campaign.

The MFA of Ukraine has repeatedly informed Budapest on the unacceptance of making public statements by the Hungarian officials instigating citizens of Ukraine to vote for a certain political party. However, Ukraine's legitimate requests were completely ignored by Budapest.

Due to ongoing Hungary's interference into Ukraine's internal affairs through political agitation, the MFA of Ukraine has protested officially on 26 October 2020 and subsequently applied a temporary entry ban to Hungarian citizens who broke the Ukrainian electoral law.

Another dubious activity of the Hungarian side, which has nothing to do with good neighborhood and could potentially destabilize internal situation in Ukraine and contradicts the recommendations of the HCNM and international law, is illegal issuance *en masse* of Hungarian passports to the citizens of Ukraine. These activities were spotted in Zakarpattia region in 2018 and till now remain without adequate reaction. In fact this constitutes a clear violation of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.

Mr. Chairperson,

As claims related to the language rights of Hungarian minority in Ukraine were broadly discussed during a number of previous meetings of the PC my delegation will refrain from repetition of its arguments. The only thing I want to highlight is that Ukraine has fully implemented the December 2017 recommendations of the Venice Commission on the Law “On Education”, including those, which were of particular importance for Hungarian minority.

According to the recommendation of the Venice Commission the transitional period of application of the 2017 Education Law was extended until 2023 and private schools were given the right to freely choose the language of the educational process. Relevant provision is foreseen by the Law “On Complete General Secondary Education” which was adopted in 2020.

Mr. Chairperson,

I will conclude by expressing hope that in future the Hungarian delegation will refrain from actions that could jeopardize positive results already achieved in bilateral dialogue. The Ukrainian leadership, in particular Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Mr. Dmytro Kuleba, whose first foreign visit in the new capacity was paid to Hungary in May, 2020, remains committed to developing friendly and equal relations with Hungary on the basis of mutual respect and full compliance with national laws and European democratic values.

Thank you!