

15 July 2014

ENGLISH

Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1007th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

10 July 2014

**In response to the report by Ms. Astrid Thors,
OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities**

Mr. Chairperson,
High Commissioner,

We have listened with interest to your report presenting the main areas of your Office's work in protecting the rights of national minorities over the past six months.

Almost a year has elapsed since you assumed the post of head of one of the key OSCE institutions, which is sufficient time to study the situation as regards national minorities in the OSCE area and identify the most complex issues. There is no denying that in recent months the Ukrainian crisis has required specific and sustained attention.

We share your view that safeguarding the rights of national minorities is primarily the responsibility of the States themselves, and agree that language policy is an extremely important factor in ensuring social stability, as is preventing attempts to distort the history of a given country. It is true that radical political forces have exploited sensitive issues with respect to various ethnic and linguistic groups in order to incite hatred. This has contributed to the escalation of tensions in Ukraine.

We support your call for a broad discussion within society of any issues concerning the rights of national minorities, and, first and foremost, linguistic rights. It will be difficult to find compromise solutions and ensure security unless all sections of society – regardless of their ethnic or social origin, political or religious views – are involved in the dialogue.

We have taken note of the information regarding your brief visit to Crimea in March of this year. The situation has changed since then. It is true that serious problems accumulated in Crimea while it was part of Ukraine. In particular, the key issue of the rehabilitation and resettlement of deported peoples was not resolved. Russia has managed to achieve a great deal – even in a short amount of time. The Crimean Tatar language has been recognized as a State language (on a par with Russian and Ukrainian). The Decree of the President of Russia on measures to rehabilitate Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek, Crimean Tatar and German populations and State support for their revival and development is being

implemented. Full participation of Crimean Tatars in the representative authorities of the Republic of Crimea has been guaranteed, and this was not the case before. Russian citizenship is being granted to those who want it; the remaining inhabitants can obtain a permanent residence permit. Regional programmes are being drawn up to support the development of the peoples of Crimea.

As for the former head of the Mejlis, Mustafa Dzhemilev, and the current head, Refat Chubarov, being denied entry to Crimea, the Office of the Public Prosecutor repeatedly warned them that activities encouraging national discord were inadmissible. They do not want to stop these activities because they are afraid of losing their backers in the United States and other Western countries. They have no idea what they will do if their people's problems are solved, as is happening now. You are well aware that only a small part of the Mejlis is bent on confrontation, and it is by no means the only Tatar association in Crimea. The Mejlis represents the interests of less than a sixth of the entire Crimean Tatar population. The overwhelming majority are co-operating happily with the Russian authorities. Attempts to isolate and inflate the subject of the legal status of the inhabitants of Crimea are groundless. If there is any information on specific problems in this area, alert us to the facts and we shall study them. No such information has been provided so far.

With regard to Mr. Dzhemilev himself, we would recommend that you watch the film entitled *Taynaya zhizn Mustafy Dzhemileva* (the Secret Life of Mustafa Dzhemilev). It is available online. He has an extensive criminal past, including involvement in underhand dealings with grants provided for the resettlement of Crimean Tatars. He has wide-ranging family businesses in Crimea and Turkey.

We welcome the High Commissioner's co-operation with the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. We urge you to continue to pay attention to ensuring the rights of national minorities, particularly in south-eastern Ukraine. We are counting on your objectivity, even-handedness and impartiality in assessing the situation of the Russian-speaking population and other minorities affected by the crisis and armed conflict.

As for other geographical aspects of the High Commissioner's work during the period covered by the report, we note your increased focus on the Balkans, Central Asia and the Trans-Caucasus.

With regard to the situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, we believe it is wrong to make any assessments without visiting these countries, let alone to refer to the "Tskhinvali region" in the report. In this connection, we would recommend that, in view of the new political and legal reality in the Trans-Caucasus, you resolve these issues, including visits to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, directly with the authorities of these States.

We trust that your visit to Moldova will bring positive developments in terms of stabilizing the situation, taking the interests of all ethnic groups into consideration and retaining schooling in national minority languages.

At the same time, it would be interesting to hear about your plans as regards visits to the Baltic States, where there has been no real change in the unsatisfactory situation concerning the rights of the Russian-speaking population. We trust that with your assistance it will at last be possible to end the deadlock on the issue of the automatic granting of citizenship to the children of so-called non-citizens. Another matter of concern is that there

are still 80 differences between the rights of non-citizens and citizens in Latvia, and some 30 differences in Estonia.

In conclusion, we should like to underscore that the current situation in the OSCE area clearly shows that the unprecedented rise in cases of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism is a most serious challenge. Unfortunately, not a single OSCE country can speak of complete satisfaction in this area. Combating these threats, which complicate the inter-ethnic situation and lead to the escalation of armed conflicts, should be the focus of constant attention and efforts on the part of the High Commissioner.

Thank you for your attention.