

Working Session 14
Roma/Sinti and, in particular, early education for Roma and Sinti children
Wednesday, 7 October 2009

**Information
on the Protection of National Minorities' Rights**

**Contribution of the Delegation of Ukraine to the Human Dimension
Implementation Meeting 2009 (Warsaw, 28 September to 9 October 2009)**

Since the declaration of its independence, Ukraine has been striving for the creation of proper conditions for equal development and active participation of representatives of national minorities in the social, economic, political, spiritual and cultural life of the society.

The legislative framework on inter-ethnic relations has created the solid foundation for harmonious combination of interests of all ethnic components of the Ukrainian society and the guarantee of equal conditions for their participation in state building processes.

One of the main achievements of Ukraine that became possible due to comprehensive and effective State ethnic policy is the absence of ethnic conflicts and confrontations on its territory.

Ukraine is a multi-ethnic state with its unique cultural and linguistic variety.

According to the All-Ukrainian census in 2001 in Ukraine there were 37.5 million Ukrainians and 10.9 million representatives of more than 130 nationalities.

As of 01.01.2009, in Ukraine there are about 1800 NGOs of national minorities, 42 of them have the national status.

The rights for Ukrainian citizens who are representatives of different nationalities as well as the guarantees of these rights are stated in the Declaration of Rights for Nationalities of Ukraine, the Constitution of Ukraine, the Law of Ukraine „On National Minorities”, Laws of Ukraine “On Education”, “On Printed Mass-Media”, “On Citizens’ Associations”, “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations”, “On Citizenship”, basic legislation on culture, as well as international acts ratified by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine including the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the European Charter for Regional or Minority languages.

The State Committee of Ukraine on Nationalities and Religions (further on the State Committee or SCNR), a central body of the executive power, is inter alia due to design and implement policies relating to inter-ethnic relations and the protection of minority rights.

SCNR in cooperation with the responsible ministries and institutions makes efforts to develop and implement the State ethnic policy, to protect the rights and freedoms of national minorities, to improve the mechanism of interaction with minorities’ NGOs. Thus, on purpose to bring legislation in the field of international relations in compliance with the Constitution of Ukraine and respective international acts ratified by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, SCNR has elaborated

a draft Law “On the Concept of State Ethnic Policy of Ukraine” and submitted it to the Ukrainian Parliament.

The priority task in the field of the legislative regulation of inter-ethnic processes stays the elaboration of the new edition of the Law of Ukraine “On National Minorities”.

Under the State Committee of Ukraine on Nationalities and Religions the Scientific Advisory Council on State Ethnic Policy will be formed. It will be a consultative body examining the actual issues of the implementation of the State ethnic policy and the definition of the strategic courses of its improvement. It will include national deputies – members of the core committee of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, leading scientists and experts.

In order to preserve and develop cultural variety, traditions and customs of national minorities in Ukraine, the SCNR developed “Complex Measures on implementation of State policy in the field of inter-ethnic relations and the development of minority cultures in Ukraine until 2010” that were approved by the Government of Ukraine.

The SCNR provides the significant number of organizational, informational and analytical activities aimed at improvement of inter-ethnic relations in cooperation with the regional authorities and with the support of advisory public organizations – the Councils of representatives of minority NGOs under the SCNR and most of the regions of Ukraine.

The State Committee of Ukraine on Nationalities and Religions provides the financial support for different cultural, language and educational activities that are carried out by minority NGOs.

In 2008 2,675,000 hrn. were allocated to implement the budgetary programme “Measures on the revival of national minorities’ culture and financial support to newspapers published in their languages”, 1,175,000 hrn. aimed at support of cultural, language and educational activities, 1,500,000 hrn. aimed at the publication of newspapers in minority languages. The chief manager of funds of this budgetary programme is the State Committee of Ukraine on Nationalities and Religions.

The SCNR, from 2006, is also a chief manager of the funds aimed at support of minority languages according to the budgetary programme “Measures on the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages”.

Annually the SCNR supports the organisation of different cultural, language and educational activities aimed at the promotion and studying minority languages. It became a tradition to carry out Days of Native Language, competitions and Olympiads on better knowledge of minority languages, festivals, conferences, “round tables”, seminars on language issues.

Otherwise, the SCNR provides publishing of dictionaries, manuals and textbooks for Sunday schools, reference books in minority languages, collection of informative and analytical materials on the national and cultural development.

In 2008 963,000 hrn. were allocated to the programme “Measures on the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages”.

In 2008 the financing was provided to 75 NGOs with different status that represent 22 national minorities from 17 regions of Ukraine.

The Ukrainian state performs the international cooperation in the field of protection of minority rights with the countries that have related ethnic minorities with Ukraine. The important mechanism of such cooperation is the activity of bilateral commissions on the protection of persons belonging to national minorities (the Bilateral Ukrainian-Slovak Commission on minorities, education and culture, the Intergovernmental Ukrainian-Romanian Commission on the protection of persons belonging to national minorities, the Ukrainian-Hungarian Commission on the protection of persons belonging to national minorities, the Subcommittee on cooperation in the field of cultural and linguistic needs of Ukrainians in the Russian Federation and Russians in Ukraine of the Ukrainian – Russian Interstate Commission).

The State Committee of Ukraine on Nationalities and Religions in cooperation with relevant ministries and institutions proceeds the realization of the Action Plan on the implementation of the Protocol of the XIV meeting of the Ukrainian-Hungarian Commission on the protection of persons belonging to national minorities.

The SCNR is working on the problem of renewal of the third cycle of the monitoring on the protection of rights of the Romanian minority in Ukraine and the Ukrainian minority in Romania. The Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities has agreed to support and facilitate the Ukrainian-Romanian dialogue on this issue.

The cooperation is going on with the Secretariat of the Council of Europe (CoE) in the framework of the CoE Action Plan on Ukraine in 2008-2011. The State Committee will work on the implementation of the project **“Achieving effective Social Inclusion for Roma: elaboration and tools for the implementation for comprehensive National Plan for Roma in Ukraine”**, scheduled in 2010. The result of the implementation of this project should be **“Concept of ethnic and social development of Roma in Ukraine” (National Plan for Roma in Ukraine) and a targeted field Programme of social and spiritual development of Roma ethnic group in Ukraine for 2011 – 2016**. A working group has been already formed to draft these documents.

In May, 2009, following the international obligations of Ukraine, the SCNR prepared and submitted to the Council of Europe the Third Report of Ukraine on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the protection of national minorities.

In order to improve the international image the bilingual (Ukrainian and English) booklet “Ukraine Multiethnic” and the collection of analytical materials on the implementation of the Framework Convention of the Council of Europe for the protection of national minorities were published in Ukraine in 2008.