

STATEMENT ON “CHRISTIAN ETHICS COURSE AT UKRAINIAN SCHOOLS”, CNMU

Respectful Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Congress of National Minorities of Ukraine would like to express its concern on the recent introduction of the course “Christian ethics” to the school curricula in Ukraine.

The course “Christian ethics” is implemented at the schools of 18 regions. Since September 2007 this course is scheduled at 106 elementary schools of Kyiv. The textbooks for this course were written at Ostrog Theological academy, Christian priests who study there also get a teacher diploma to teach this course in Ukrainian schools. The textbooks are based on the Orthodox paradigm of Christianity but contain general ethic norms as well. At some schools this subject was taught by priests, who practiced the prayers and christening with students. The course is a part of alternative part of the school curricula that means that schools can choose this or other subjects. The parents can refuse child’s participation at the course but there is no alternative for such child during this school hour. In some regions this course had replaced the courses on civic education that were already taught at schools.

Regarding that Ukraine is a multi-religious country and even Christianity has at least 20 different confessions here and taking into consideration that the school is a secular institution according to the Constitution of Ukraine such school course should be considered as violation of the freedom of religion and belief.

The Congress of National Minorities of Ukraine would like to recommend OSCE to draw attention of Ukrainian government to Toledo guidelines on teaching about religion. The best practices of intercultural interreligious programme “Source of Tolerance” can be used as well to teach about religious diversity and ethic norms of different religious at schools.

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