

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

PC.DEL/1635/23
7 December 2023

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1455th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

7 December 2023

**In response to the report by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities,
Kairat Abdrakhmanov**

High Commissioner,

We welcome you to the Permanent Council. We have carefully studied the report and would like to comment on it.

The disastrously deteriorating situation of the rights of national minorities and ethnic groups in Ukraine calls for your active and immediate intervention. The Kyiv regime continues to aggressively eradicate the Russian language and deprive an overwhelming part of the country's population of their legal rights. In your report, you make only a passing reference to the Law on Ukraine's National Minorities (Communities). However, you say nothing about the fact that this legal "opus" contains blatantly discriminatory language in relation to ethnic Russians.

In addition to the previously imposed restrictions, Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine have been deprived of the right to hold public, cultural, entertainment and recreational events in their native language or to reproduce announcements, posters or other information material in Russian. In settlements where Russian speakers traditionally live or make up a significant part of the population, they are prohibited from advertising in their native language, including in the local media. Secondary school pupils studying in the Russian language are not entitled to free textbooks from the State, including e-books. The powers of the authorities to restrict the legitimate rights and freedoms of ethnic groups at their discretion have also been expanded. Together with other legislation, including laws on the functioning of the Ukrainian language as the State language and in education, the use of Russian has been reduced to private communication and religious practices.

On 24 November this year, a draft law on amendments to certain laws of Ukraine concerning the consideration of the expert assessment of the Council of Europe and its bodies on the rights of national minorities (communities) in specific spheres was submitted to the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament). It is supposed to "correct" the laws governing the country's language policy. The expansion of the use of official languages of European Union countries, including the possibility of instruction in one's native language, and the easing of requirements in the media and book publishing, look particularly cynical against

the backdrop of the *de facto* indefinite ban on the main language of communication of millions of citizens, namely Russian.

Sensing their immunity from punishment, the representatives of the Kyiv regime have gone even further. By continuing to legitimize repression – with the full complicity of their Western handlers and human rights bodies – they have moved on to denying the existence of the Russian-speaking population. In early November, Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration Olha Stefanishyna went as far as claiming the following: “There is no Russian minority in Ukraine. It does not exist. There is not a single legally registered community that identifies itself as a Russian minority. There are Ukrainians, some of whom speak Russian.” A similar position was expressed a few days ago by the Chairman of the country’s parliament Ruslan Stefanchuk: “There are no Russian national minorities in Ukraine now, nor can there be.” No reaction of any kind to this type of hate speech, which is not in line with either ethno-demographic realities or the international obligations of this State, has been received from the Office of the High Commissioner nor from you personally.

High Commissioner,

We note your attention to the problems of indigenous peoples in OSCE participating States. The Western handlers of the Zelenskyy regime encourage gross human rights violations by their protégés but turn a blind eye to the problems existing in their own backyard.

In early October this year, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights issued its concluding observations following its review of the report on France. In these observations, the experts called upon the authorities to review their position with regard to minorities and “to officially recognize the need to protect the cultural and linguistic rights of all minority groups, including those of Indigenous Peoples in the overseas territories”. It is well known that French Polynesia and French Guiana regularly criticize the French Government for its draconian language policy.

The Committee also recommended that “[the State party] recognize and promote the right of persons belonging to regional ... linguistic groups, including Indigenous Peoples, to practise their own language as part of their right to participate in cultural life, not only in their private lives but also in public life, in regions where regional languages are traditionally spoken”.

The situation in the United States of America should also remain under your watchful eye. Following her visit to the country in early November of this year, the United Nations Human Rights Council’s Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, Ms. Ashwini K.P., arrived at some disappointing conclusions. “Systemic racism often manifests itself in pervasive racial stereotypes, prejudice and bias and is frequently rooted in histories and legacies of enslavement, the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans and colonialism.” She went on to state that “Black individuals are often most severely impacted by systemic racism as rooted in histories and legacies of enslavement. ... the white supremacy and settler colonialism that is inherent to systemic racism also contributes to other forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, including manifestations that impact indigenous peoples, Latinos, migrants, Asians, Jewish communities, Muslim individuals, and Arabs.”

More detailed information on these questions, also in OSCE participating States, can be found in the recent report by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the situation regarding the glorification of Nazism and the spread of neo-Nazism and other practices that contribute to fuelling contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. We urge you, High Commissioner, to respond substantively to the issues raised in it.

High Commissioner,

We note your comments on the problem of violations of the rights of the Russian and Russian-speaking population in certain OSCE participating States. In some of them, segregation is long-standing and entrenched. The Russian special military operation in Ukraine has simply given an additional impetus or, as it is now fashionable to say, served as a “trigger” for a new round of unbridled Russophobia. The link between resolving the conflict and ensuring the rights of ethnic Russians is quite artificial.

The Baltic States are very illustrative in this respect, where the official authorities have unleashed the entire weight of their own historical complexes, pettiness and squabbling on the Russian-speaking population, whose rights are already severely compromised.

In Latvia and Estonia, the long-standing problem of statelessness persists. According to the statistics authority, there are 175,401 stateless persons (9.3 per cent of the population) in Latvia and 66,592 (5 per cent of the population) in Estonia. In accordance with the High Commissioner’s Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Social and Economic Life, States “should adopt measures to address and eradicate statelessness as an obstacle to full and effective social and economic participation”.

In practice, however, the linguistic, educational, civil and political rights of “non-citizens”, national minorities and ethnic groups are flagrantly violated in those countries. International human rights bodies, alas, condone these manifestations. For example, the European Court of Human Rights recently recognized the legitimacy of education reform in Latvia. We remind you that as a result of its implementation, the bilingual education system was swiftly abolished and Latvian imposed in schools and kindergartens as the exclusive teaching language. There is no access to native-language education at any other level. We remind you that this is a State in which Russian is the second most widespread language, spoken by more than a third of the inhabitants.

Lithuania is not free from Russophobic manifestations either. The question of depriving Russian ballerina Ilze Liepa of Lithuanian citizenship for statements that differ from the official position has been under consideration there since the end of November of this year. The Lithuanian authorities have already implemented this process in connection with the figure skater Margarita Drobiazko, who was recently stripped of her Lithuanian citizenship.

High Commissioner,

These diverse examples of violations of the rights of national minorities and indigenous peoples call for a proactive response on your part. We urge you to make good use of the additional time entrusted to you by all participating States in this post to deal with real problems and not to waste energy promoting anti-Russian attitudes and dubious competencies outside your mandate as High Commissioner on National Minorities.

Thank you for your attention.